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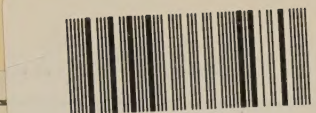

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THE CHILD IN THE CHURCH

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Imprimatur

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Vic. Gen.

Glasguae

Die 23 *Februarii*, 1929.

May the Apostolic Benediction which we confer upon our beloved daughter, Maria Montessori, be a pledge of those graces and heavenly favours which we wish her in order to render fruitful of good the method of scientific pedagogy applied to infant education in the "Case dei Bambini" (Montessori Schools). Given at the Vatican, Nov. 21st, 1918.

BENEDICTUS P.P. XV

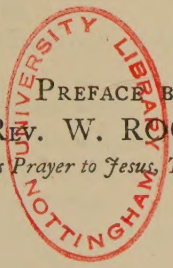
THE CHILD IN THE CHURCH

Essays on the Religious Education of Children and the Training of Character

By

MARIA MONTESSORI

Edited by MORTIMER STANDING
With a chapter on the Montessori Method



PREFACE BY
THE REV. W. ROCHE, S.J.
(Author of *A Child's Prayer to Jesus*, *The Children's Bread*, etc.)

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PREFACE

"ANY introduction to a good book," says a critic of our time, "must necessarily be somewhat of an impertinence." How then if the book is *very* good indeed as this certainly is in the estimation of the present writer? May he be condoned then by the author and by all who have at heart, as indeed he has himself at heart, the business of this book. Let his apology be the fact that the editor is obdurate and holds him to an incautious promise given under the glow occasioned by a glance through the proof-sheets.

Certainly the book has no need of recommendation; its title and the name of Dr. Montessori dispense with that. These should of themselves secure a welcome from all Catholic teachers and governesses, and all mothers, and fathers too, who care about the souls of their children, and even by all priests, both for their own edification and pleasure, and because it is their privilege to counsel others in the conduct even of children's early years. Indeed it should be read by everyone of whatever creed who believes in the personal and interior religion of the young, and who would encourage and deepen these brightest, unclouded, sweetest of our human relations with Almighty God till they can be trusted, from first to last continuously, to be the support and joy of life.

How best to secure this happy result is still the burning question of Catholic School education and this little book will add much fuel to the flame. It contains a first-hand account of what has actually been done by Dr. Montessori herself for the development of the child's religious instincts in one large school. This description is followed by the record of an interview in which many questions which agitate the minds of teachers were pushed home, and very satisfactory answers secured. The whole book is very enlivening and enlightening and will no doubt freshen the smouldering fires of controversy.

This timely volume will prove an antidote to despondency, a stimulus to cheerful hope, such as was experienced a few years back when Father Drinkwater, the zealous editor and founder of *The Sower*, started his splendid and courageous pioneer work, still happily full of eager life and promise. The observant reader cannot fail to notice how Dr. Montessori's spirit and practice, and Father Drinkwater's suggestions meet and confirm one another on several important points of detail ; while on the main principles that underlie their methods their agreement would seem complete.

In *The Sower*, it will be remembered, the able editor from the first devoted his reconstructions exclusively to the subject of teaching religion in our schools. His aim was to revivify and, so to say, naturalize the one lesson in the school course which alone lingered behind the rest in the rut of the old routine, untouched as yet by "the new birth of teaching power." Dr. Montessori, on the contrary,

started with the general mental culture of the child. Only later, and recently, after many years of successful experimental work in that larger field, and after a deep personal insight into the inarticulate religious cravings of the unspoilt, normal child did she turn her ripe experience and acknowledged talent to the problem of the child's spiritual needs.

We have here in this little volume a record of a rich sample of her new work. The reading of it will re-assure and deepen that daily increasing confidence in her methods amongst those especially who have discovered " that not to every one is given the peculiar, perhaps rare, endowment of intense sympathy with the young," and who candidly acknowledge that only to such rare distinctive sympathy does the mysterious and still uncharted region of the child's mind lie open.

That distinctive sympathy, a sense of oneness with the child's interior life, is the Golden Key that admits the owner into the heart's sanctuary, where he is privileged to share the dream-visions, the mystic and poetic intimations, the musings, the fears, the expectations, the quickening wonder with which the child starts life's pilgrimage from self to God. A mystery to itself, moving in a world of mystery, the frail creature can be observed, as it were, groping silently—as a plant feels for light—in search of objects on which it may pour out some part of its immense charity, reverence, trustfulness and hope, and thereby in turn feed its own hungry and surging life.

Dr. Montessori, and those who fundamentally agree with her, possess each his own private copy of

this Golden Key. But what is even better, she has discovered (and others may discover it from this sketch) that the Catholic Church is itself the ideal Master Key, in imperishable Gold, fitting all human locks exactly, however few or many may be the wards, and however simple or intricate and tortuous, large or small the chambers. She shows us here experimentally how perfectly this Lock and Key fit each other even from earliest years : how they work together smoothly, evenly, and so naturally that they were evidently meant for one another ; meant to meet by the Maker of both Key and Lock, Who is withal the humble " Nurse of infant loves."

Here are her own words :

" The Liturgy, magnificent expression of the content of the Faith, may well be called ' the pedagogical method ' of the Catholic Church which, not satisfied with teaching by means of the word preached to the faithful, makes the various acts of religion real, makes them, as it were, live, and allows the people to take part in them each day. And to find life-giving food for his soul the child has but to open these portals resplendent with divine light, portals resplendent with all the solemnity given to them through the ages, by the lives of the saints, who found in the Liturgy a means of fructifying the virgin soil of their souls, open to the sweet influence of divine grace."

No doubt the work recorded here was carried out at Barcelona under ideal conditions. We cannot hope to find such favourable conditions everywhere, and certainly not with the short-timed lessons of our elementary schools. It is, however, very well worth

while to watch things worked out, even for once, on an ideal scale under almost perfect conditions. It provides object lessons that, like a great work of art, put us on our trial, test our judgments, our aims, our sense of values. It almost forces us to approve or condemn ; to say either, that is the wrong way, or that is the right way to teach realities whereby the child's free soul will freely and naturally be bound more closely to Religion and Morality. It gives us a standard, an ideal to accept as far as circumstances will allow, or to reject in favour of—well, what alternative ?

Someone worth hearing has said : " It takes fifty years to get a reform taken up in a working school." Be that so, then the time is ripe. It is well over fifty years since that ideal catechist and teacher of Catholic youth, Mgr. Dupanloup, inaugurated certain new methods in his effective work in Parisian schools ; and later in his educational writings enunciated and expounded these methods together with aims and ruling principles, new to the world of that day, but now accepted generally almost as obvious truisms. " Among these (says the *Catholic Encyclopædia*) are his conceptions of education as a process of developing mental activity instead of injecting knowledge into the mind, and his insistence on the duty of the teacher to respect the freedom of the pupil." " Je respecterai la liberté humaine dans le moindre enfant " was to him a maxim.

Reading this little book you will seem to be gathering not the spring blossom but the ripe fruit of seed sown and ground prepared some sixty years ago.

W. ROCHE, S.J.

INTRODUCTION

THIS book, small as it is, has not been written in one piece, but has grown, bit by bit, during the past five or six years. And it has grown rather irregularly and unexpectedly—like a house that has been added to from time to time, as occasion demands. This sufficiently explains why it contains a certain amount of repetition, and is somewhat lacking in general symmetry of design.

The original part of the building, as one might say, was Chapter I. This is a translation of the pamphlet, " Bambini Viventi Nella Chiesa," which was published in Italy over five years ago. In 1924 I was about to publish this translation together with Chapter X (the Comparison between the Method of the Catholic Church and the Montessori Method), when I was told of the excellent work which was being done—along the lines of Dr. Montessori's experiment in Barcelona—by the Notre Dame Sisters at the Dowanhill, Glasgow. So I decided to wait until I had had the opportunity of seeing their work for myself. The valuable photos (Figs. I—IX) and the description of the Lesson with the Model Altar (p. 173) are some of the results of this visit.

Before the MS. thus augmented had gone to the publisher, I met Dr. Montessori again in London, in April, 1927. The series of conversations which I

then had with her resulted in another wing being added to the original building—*viz.*, Chapter II on "The Atrium." The Chapter on the Spiritual Training of the Teacher was also worked out by Dr. Montessori about this time.

It then occurred to me that amongst the readers of the book there would almost certainly be some who—while interested in the religious training of children—had no ideas as to the Montessori Method in general, or—just as likely—had mistaken ideas. So it was then decided to insert a chapter dealing with the general principles of the Method. It would be impossible for any one fully to appreciate the value of Dr. Montessori's work in the sphere of religious teaching without a general comprehension of the psychological principles along which she works. So that is how Chapter IX came into being.

Finally, since it was obvious that no teacher could successfully apply her methods for the Teaching of Religion without understanding the general technique of dealing with children according to her principles, it was thought advisable to include chapters dealing with the training of the character of the child, and with the practical difficulties which beset the Directress who adopts the Montessori Method.

In such a manner then has this book come into being ; and though one is conscious that it is not without defects due to the rather haphazard way in which it has grown, it bears nevertheless the stamp of Dr. Montessori's genius, and cannot fail to open up new horizons to every reader.

In conclusion I would like to express my thanks to the various persons who have been kind enough to help in the translation of the different chapters. Especially would I like to record my gratitude to the Sisters of Notre Dame, at Dowanhill, Glasgow, and to Major Dease for their generous assistance.

THE EDITOR.

March, 1929.

ALTAR IN THE CHILDREN'S CHAPEL
at the Model Montessori School, Barcelona.

THE LIFE OF THE CHILD WITHIN THE CHURCH

". . . I implore the dear and all-powerful little ones, to stretch out to me their helping hands from the altar."—
Benedict XV.

WHEN, at Barcelona, we began religious education in the " Model Montessori School," not only had our plan of action been long and well considered, but a significant incident was connected with the actual undertaking.

Father Casulleras, missionary priest of St. Vincent de Paul, remarkable, both as a preacher, and as an Apostle of Charity, came back from Guatemala, Central America, in 1909. He was filled with the conviction that the child should be brought into the Church, to live and grow up there, since the Church is the true place of education for the child. In the different towns of the Balearic Isles, where, as Superior, he directed the Fathers of the Mission and the Sisters of Charity, he spoke of the necessity of having " Houses for the Children " within the protecting shadow of the Church. He had not yet heard of my " Children's Houses " in Rome, and it was only in 1910 that, by chance, he came across my book, where I describe them. To Padre Casulleras the coincidence of names seemed providential, and,

having read the account of my method, he judged it suited to his "Children's Houses." Straightway he went to speak of the matter to the Chaplain of the Maternity Home at Barcelona—Father Clascar, a learned man, who had translated the Bible and the Psalms into the Catalan vernacular, and who was one of the founders of the Institute of Catalan Studies. They immediately agreed to apply my method to the children of the Home ; they did so, not only there, but in all the Orphanages of the Balearic Isles conducted by the Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul.

Although these Fathers neither knew me, nor knew that I was a Catholic, and, although in my book, I made no direct profession of religious faith, it seemed to them that in its very substance my method was Catholic.

The humility and the patience of the mistress ; the superior value of deeds over words ; the sensorial environment as the beginning of the life of the soul ; the silence and recollection obtained from the children ; the liberty left to the child soul in striving after perfection ; the minute care in preventing and correcting all that is evil, even simple error, or slight imperfection ; the control of error by means within the very material for development ; the respect shown for the interior life of the child—all were pedagogical principles which seemed to them to emanate from, and to be directly inspired by Catholicism.[1]

It was not till later, when we first came into personal touch that we spoke of the importance of

[1] See Chap. x.

attempting to apply the principles of my method directly to religious education.

The Abbot Primate of the Benedictines of the celebrated Sanctuary of Our Lady of Montserrat, so kindly welcomed this idea that he invited my colleague, Anna Maccheroni, to take part in a Liturgical Congress which was held in the Basilica of Montserrat. The pedagogical problem set before us had, in reality, already been indicated and fundamentally solved by the Holy Father, Pius X. In his Decree on the Communion of Children, he expressed the wish that they should be admitted to an earlier participation in the Holy Mysteries than was usual among Christian peoples. Another fundamental point, too, which bears, it might be said on "technical pedagogy" was indicated by the Holy Pontiff, in the words "let us educate the people to take a more active participation in the Liturgy"; and with the people, therefore, little children were to be admitted to the most intimate and sublime act of religious life—communion with JESUS CHRIST.

The Liturgy, magnificent expression of the content of the Faith, may well be called "the pedagogical method" of the Catholic Church which, not satisfied with teaching by means of the word preached to the faithful, makes the various acts of religion real, makes them, as it were, live, and allows the people to take part in them each day. And to find life-giving food for his soul the child has but to open these portals resplendent with divine light, portals resplendent with all the solemnity given to them through the ages, by the lives of the saints, who found in the Liturgy a means of

fructifying the virgin soil of their souls, open to the sweet influence of divine grace.

Formerly, when teaching was limited to telling the child the facts of Sacred History and making him memorize in Catechism answers the truths of Christian Doctrine, we were, if I may be allowed so to express myself, drawing the child away from the Church.

But if the adult needs not only to know but to " live " his religion, the need is all the greater for the child, who is more adapted to live it than to know it. Are not the limits of the problem concerning the religious education of the child identical with those of the various methods of learning and memorizing ? In fact, knowledge, in our case, is nothing else but the first indispensable step in opening out for the soul the paths of life.

Here, then, is a necessary complement of the religious instruction of the child ; make the Liturgy accessible to children. The grand ceremonies of the Church, the sacred symbolism, the deep significance underlying everything, the exact use and end of all the objects, the systematic distribution of the various offices—all give a fundamental importance to the place where the faithful meet, and, at the same time, afford sensible means, such as lights, colours, sounds, which help the soul, just as benches and kneelers assist the body to remain long in Church without becoming fatigued. And so the teaching of the Liturgy soon became widespread for young people but not for little children.

Now this was exactly the argument handled by Anna Maccheroni in the Church of Montserrat.

She affirmed before the whole Congress, which comprised all the clergy of Catalonia, that the teaching of the Liturgy set forth by Mons. Ridolfi, Bishop of Vicenza, as the illustration of Christian Doctrine, approved by Pius X, and distributed in various books for children of different ages could be modified in the following way. The material dealt with in Vols. 4, 5, 6 could be placed in Vol. 1, and so explained to little children. She added that she was ready to try the experiment in the Montessori School of the Barcelona Deputation which received children from three to six years of age. Signorina Maccheroni's discourse, so full of the spirit of living faith, was approved, and remains as an historical document in our educational work. (*The Liturgy and the Pedagogical Teaching of the Liturgy.* Anna Maccheroni in *Report of the Liturgical Congress of Montserrat.*)

A young priest, Mossèn Iginio Angelès, was chosen on account of his simple, pure and ardent faith as the apostle of our youngest children.

The result of this proposition was the opening of " The Children's House in the Church," founded by Father Casulleras, and there began for them a new life—that of " the little ones living in the Church," while, at the same time, the Montessori Method was furnished with a long desired opportunity of penetrating deeper into the life of the child's soul, and of thus fulfilling its true educational mission.

The first step was " to prepare the place " for the little ones, that is the Chapel, which had to be the most beautiful room in the house. The Provincial Deputation of Barcelona, fired with the enthusiasm

breathed into the work by a man of genius, Enrico Prat de la Riba (dead, alas ! before he had completed the noble work initiated by him in Catalonia), engaged distinguished artists to adorn the " Children's Chapel " in white and gold, the walls being furnished with hangings of yellow damask. Little seats, holy water fonts within easy reach, pictures, and little statues placed at the height of one metre from the ground indicated that the new lilliputian race aspired to be received as " active members " of the Church and no longer in virtue only of the rights accorded to them by the grace of Baptism. A rich and beautiful crib was prepared in readiness for Christmas.

Mossèn Angelès, deeply moved, began to officiate and to preach in this unusual Church, and what was witnessed is, indeed, worthy of mention. One could see how little children, because of their innocence, can feel in a purer and more intense manner, even if less definitely than the adult, the need of God's presence. Their soul seems to be more open to divine intuitions than that of the adult, despite his more perfectly developed intelligence and skill in reasoning.

Meanwhile, the application of the method followed in my " Children's Houses " produced this excellent fruit—the Church almost seemed to be the end of the education which the method proposed to give. The " silence " observed in class, to accustom the child to be recollected, here found its application : it became the interior recollection observed in the House of God, amid the gentle flickering of the candlelight in an atmosphere dim, yet resplendent

with gleaming white and gold. Again, the following actions were practically repetitions of what the child had learnt to do in the classroom : walking silently avoiding all noise, placing chairs quietly, standing up and sitting down composedly, passing between benches and by-standers without knocking against them, carrying objects, even fragile ones, with care, so as to let no harm come to them, for example : carrying lighted candles without covering hands and clothes with wax, or baskets of flowers, or vases of water to be filled with flowers and then placed at the foot of the altar.

Such things, therefore, must appear to their tender minds as the end of effort patiently sustained, whence issues for them a pleasing sense of joy and of new dignity. Before such an apprenticeship, these tiny members of the Church feel that they are servants executing material tasks without understanding what they do ; after it, and after what they have learnt has been applied in Church, they begin to comprehend and to distinguish between the different circumstances. In order to grasp this idea one ought to know the Montessori Method in the " Children's Houses," which prepares the children, in the daily life of the classroom, by exercises which are, in themselves, quite independent of the religious education, but which seem to be a preparation for it. In fact they aid in perfecting the child, in making him calm, obedient, attentive to his own movements, capable of silence and recollection.

When this preparation has been made the child finds in the Church the means for its application

which are attractive, varied and deeply significative, and he receives, as a result, a sense of dignity and satisfaction. Moreover, the very fact of performing, for different purposes, acts, which, though similar, are capable of diverse application and signification constitutes already in itself another source of intellectual development. The child of four is not ignorant of the difference between the holy water stoup into which he puts his tiny hand, before blessing himself, and the basins in the next room where he washes his hands. Now just this appreciation of the difference between like things is real, intellectual labour which the little creature initiates when he begins to realize that he is a child of God, lovingly received in the house of the great Heavenly Father, though hitherto he has been considered almost incapable of rising to any idea or concept.

I had yet to meet many persons incredulous of the reality of such impressions. "Do you know why my little nephew wants to go to school in time for Mass?" "Because you let him put out the candles. That is all. Would it not be better to apply this pleasing exercise to Arithmetic?—for example, to hold ten lighted candles and then to put them out counting one, two, three, etc."

The critic who spoke thus to me had but a poor spiritual understanding and little knowledge of children. The arithmetical exercise with the candles would have lasted at most a week, the time necessary, more or less, to learn to count from one to ten. But those children as they grew older, and continued their instruction, either in general or religious

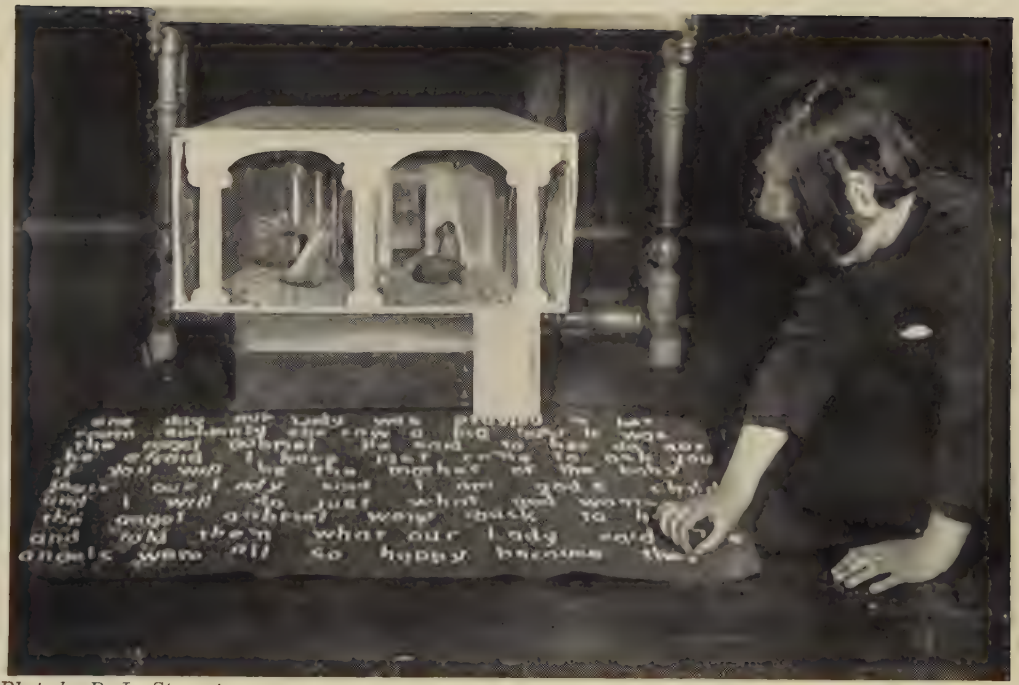


Photo by D. L. Stewart.

NOTRE DAME MONTESSORI SCHOOL, DOWANHILL, GLASGOW

Model illustrating the First Joyful Mystery of The Rosary—The Annunciation. With the aid of the movable script letters the child is making a little composition describing the scene depicted in the model.

knowledge, would observe, in Church, the putting out of the candles that consume themselves, burning in the presence of Jesus descended amongst them, and they would understand that the act was not a mere childish pastime but a religious function to be reverently fulfilled, because done in a sacred place, and bearing upon the worship paid to God.

When Mossèn Angelès began to explain the Sacraments he wished to address himself to the older children only, but the youngest would not go away, and followed his words with the greatest attention. This truly extraordinary priest seemed born for his mission, and even the little children of three followed him spell-bound. He prepared the Baptismal Font, and the things necessary for the rite ; chose the god-father and god-mother from among the children themselves ; asked someone to bring a little baby over whom he performed, one by one, the sacred rites used in the administration of this great Sacrament. On other occasions, a bigger child acted as a catechumen and asked for Baptism. The children showed keen interest in learning that Baptism in the early days of the Church was conferred on adults, and that, to them, it is still given when they are converted to Catholicism. Thus, they gathered, little by little, their first notions of the Liturgy. They understood, for example, how the Mass is the representation, par excellence, of the Passion and Death of Christ ; the older amongst them served Mass, and the younger came at the Offertory bringing their gifts to the Altar, and when the Divine Sacrifice was over they extinguished the candles.

By such means, when the time for First Communion comes, the children find that they have already "lived in the Church," for three or four years. They have a knowledge of religious things really quite unusual, considering their tender age. They are already accustomed to examine their conscience in order to purify it, and keep it free from faults. Oh! if only psychologists knew these exercises and this innate tendency of the child soul! Religiously inclined, and free in their intellectual operations and in the work which the Montessori Method offers them, the little ones prove themselves to be exceptionally "strong and robust" souls, just as the bodies of well-nourished, well-cared-for children are robust. Growing up in this way, they display neither shyness nor fear, nor credulity. They show a pleasing ease and grace of manner, courage, accurate knowledge of things, faith above all in life and in God, the author and conserver of life.

One happy result of the instruction of the First Communicants in Barcelona recalls an analogous incident in "The Children's Houses" of San Lorenzo in Rome. In those early days when my method began to be applied amongst the children of the poor and unlettered classes in one of the most destitute quarters of Rome, the fact that little children of four and a half could write made a great impression. The illiterate parents, filled with admiration and astonishment, were overcome with shame at their own ignorance. Many came to the school asking that they, too, might be taught to write. In the school at Barcelona, Mossèn

Angelès had the consolation of seeing the parents of the First Communicants present themselves before him, humbly begging for instruction so that they might make their First Communion with their own little ones. " He is so small," they would say, " and explains the things of God to us with so much faith that we are ashamed ; we wish to rejoice with him, and not to be separated from his soul."

But how inscrutable are the ways of Providence ! Our work, although humble, might have merited a final triumph. During these years of trial, however, all who supported it died ; first Enrico Prat de la Riba who had founded the school and whose work was not understood by his successors. Bishop Casulleras and Dr. Clascar also died. And . . . the evolution of " *modern Catalan culture* " prides itself on its advanced views when it puts religion in its proper place, that is, not in the first place which belongs to it, of right, but, not too much *en evidence*, in order to leave liberty for the development of ideas which have already had their day in other countries.

Thus there creeps in a so-called " broadness " of ideas which makes religion hazy and prepares the way for future storms. This is, only too truly, the new movement of the so-called social reformers. Why did God allow us to be driven away from the first " Children's House within the Church " ? Perhaps so that we may be compelled to go further afield in our Apostolate : " Go and teach all nations "—such are the strong and consoling words of Jesus Christ.

The Offertory at Mass and Communion

The following notes will serve to indicate briefly some particulars of the religious education in the school of Barcelona after the attempt was made to annex to it a Pedagogical Laboratory. A learned priest, Dr. Antonio Battle, my first assistant in the Laboratory, collaborated with Mossèn Angelès and me, generously contributing valuable work with the object of applying my method to religious education. Although Dr. Battle himself is about to write a complete account of it, I have thought it well to give here a simple indication, almost an enumeration, of the proceedings we followed.

1. THE OFFERTORY IN THE MASS

In order to make the children understand and remember that the Mass represents an offering, a sacrifice (to make sacred a thing which is separated from others in order to pay homage to the majesty of God) and consequently differs from such devotions as the Way of the Cross, Benediction, etc., the children themselves prepare and offer the species : they cultivate the grain and the vine ; they make the hosts, and then they offer the bread and wine at the Altar when Mass is being celebrated.

Part of a large meadow, in which the children used to play after dinner, was destined for the cultivation of the wheat and the vine. Two rectangles were chosen by the children themselves, one to the right, the other to the left of the meadow. A grain that ripens quickly was selected. Into the parallel furrows now ready, each child cast a few seeds, so

that all sowed some. The movements for sowing, care that the seeds should not fall outside the furrow, the gravity and solemnity with which the outdoor ceremony was conducted—everything made them immediately understand how the act was suited to the end proposed.

Shortly after, the vines were planted : they were like dry roots, and gave little promise of the wonder the children were henceforth to expect—namely the appearance one day of real clusters of grapes. The young shoots were placed in a trench in parallel lines, the plants being equidistant. The two little fields had to be enclosed. It seemed best to plant flowers all round as a perpetual homage of fragrance and beauty to the vines that would ripen and give the fruit, one day to become the matter for the Eucharistic Consecration. The children continued to play in the other part of the meadow ; they made brick buildings, they dug trenches ; they constructed little paved roads ; they ran, played ball, and in their merriment they themselves were flowers around the two fields.

With the joy of playing was mingled the deeper sentiment of assisting daily at the marvel of growth. In the wheat field, parallel lines of green really began to appear, and the grain grew and rose up awakening the keenest interest in the children. At last even the dry shoots began to put forth tiny, pale leaves. The children gathered round, observing ; some were chosen to disinfect the vine-plants in order to protect them from peronospora. When the wonderful clusters appeared, they enveloped them in white netting to guard them against insects.

It was decided that for the opening and closing of the school year, two out-of-door feasts should be established : one corresponding to the harvest, the other to the vintage. These feasts, we thought, might be brightened by rustic music on primitive instruments and by folk-songs, some of which were so harmonious that in ancient times the music was used for sacred hymns of the Church. A doubt then arose : could the reaping be done by the children themselves ? The yellow ears, richly laden, were all in a line ; the children were a-thrill with interest, so we decided to trust to their prudence. Just as at table, relying on their movement and will-training, we had placed a knife in their little hands, so now we entrusted to them the scythe —tiny scythes, made on purpose, with gleaming white handles. Everything went well. With care, with evident pleasure, with emotion perhaps deeper still, they cut all the wheat. Next came the hilarious joy of making the sheaves, binding them with coloured ribbon, placing them in rows, then bidding them farewell, to await their return as flour.

The machines for making the hosts and for cutting the large and small circles provided manual occupation.

The idea seemed so good that, at the Bishop's Palace, there was question of taking for the solemn procession of Corpus Christi, in Barcelona and its suburbs, hosts cut by the children's hands, and made of the flour from that seed which had grown amid the joy, and the vigilant care of innocent creatures. The field-work and the open-air feasts organized in God's honour, and carried out as a proof

of divine love have their epilogue in the solemn offering of the Mass.

The children unite in choosing the bearer of the offering who is becomingly dressed; the little girls wear white veils. Two amphoræ are used for carrying the water and the wine. In the Ciborium is placed the necessary number of little hosts, or, those who wish to communicate at Mass can offer their host at the Altar rails where they are afterwards to receive Holy Communion. The children march in line carrying the offerings in small baskets, or on rush plates covered with little cloths ornamented with lace.

II. COMMUNION

Help given to the Communicants

The children, who, during the school year will be seven, are put forward for First Communion which always takes place in May. The final group of chosen ones is determined after consultation between the family and the school. The children, who, at all ages assist at and take part in the religious exercises, wish to be admitted to First Communion at six, or even at five.

The choice of the candidates for First Communion is a great event for the whole school ; they are the object of the love and protection of everybody ; their names are printed on cards with a petition for prayers that they may prepare well to receive Our Lord. Each class-room, the Chapel, even the entrance to the school, has affixed to the wall one of these cards, so that the parents, and all who enter the school are informed of what is about to take place,

in order that they may all unite in prayer. Every day their companions are reminded of the need of divine help for those chosen for the Espousals of Eucharistic Communion. The preparation lasts five weeks. Each of these weeks begins at 10 a.m. on Saturday—a day on which there is only light work in school, in fact almost rest. Every Saturday, therefore, a collective ceremony is held at which assist all the children, big and small, the teaching and the serving staffs. All gather round the future communicants to help them, to support them by their presence, and their prayers, and to rejoice with them. A priest stands between the Altar and the Communion-rails, the communicants to right and left. On the table of offering are lighted candles and various objects connected with the lesson of the day : such as a facsimile of the Table of Moses, etc. After a few words of explanation, the priest solemnly bestows upon each of the communicants, a page artistically printed and adorned by a picture.

On this text, presented with so much solemnity, will turn the religious instruction of the whole week : and, at the end, the five sheets bound together will make a book—a souvenir of First Communion.

During the week the children learn by heart that portion of the matter which contains the nucleus of the teaching, the Creed, the Commandments, etc.

The following Saturday, one by one, clearly and distinctly they recite what they have studied, before the Altar and in the presence of all. This is not done on the last week, because the ceremony of that week, the 6th, is the First Communion.

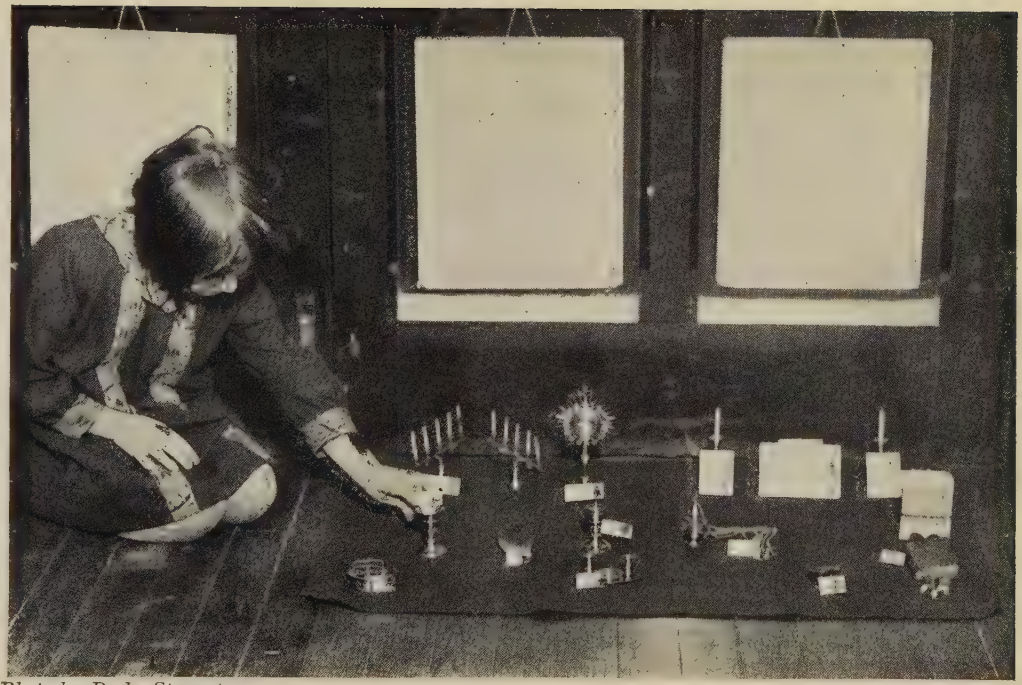


Photo by D. L. Stewart.

NOTRE DAME MONTESSORI SCHOOL, DOWANHILL, GLASGOW

Learning the names of the sacred vessels by means of miniature models made in brass. The child places a card with a name on it next to the corresponding model.

All their companions and the mistresses present pray for them and sing a hymn. The pages given to them on the five consecutive Saturdays contain the following points :

(1) Faith, the dogmas—*The Creed.*
(2) Love, charity—*The Commandments.*
(3) Prayer—*Pater*, *Ave*, *Gloria.*
(4) The Sacraments—*Confession.*
(5) Mass—*The Eucharist.*

In the last week the children go into retreat for the five days before their First Communion, from Monday to Friday inclusive. They live apart from their companions and a portion of the garden is cut off and reserved for them. In the class-rooms, too, they are separated.

They dine in school alone and recollected. This segregation is, however, neither sad nor wearisome, for numberless attentions and proofs of love reach the little solitaries. Meanwhile the older boys in the school, give all their attention to the preparation for the Solemn Mass, sung in Gregorian Chant, and the music being practised in their honour, sweetly reaches the ears of the future communicants. The little ones in Retreat, laugh and work. They are taught by means of lantern slides, and a special and tender care surrounds them. They pass the greater part of the time in the garden, occupied in looking after the plants and the animals.

Other manual work consists in making their own silver rosaries which they will use on their First Communion Day, and they themselves bind in book form the five pages within a little cover.

Physical exercises suited to the occasion consist

in practice in standing up and sitting down, in walking quietly without knocking against people or things, in genuflecting, in kneeling down and rising up, in observing silence, in keeping a becoming attitude, in not turning the head at a noise. The occupation of the heart consists in raising the thoughts to God at every action during the day, in loving and praising Him.

The suitability of a retreat of five days for little children was well considered and discussed before the experiment was tried. I had faith in the dispositions developed by education which had made them patient and tranquil workers—already given to a kind of spontaneous meditation by the "cycle of work,"[1]—observers of external things and therefore capable of finding satisfaction for themselves; lovers of silence, and the stillness which produces it, attentive to the little movements of their own muscles and capable of controlling themselves. Such children are ready to go a step further and apply the directions to their own interior movements. Not only do the principles of human justice interest them, but a simple love of Jesus is born in their hearts and with it a great desire of purification. The soul of the child is capable of high aspirations which are reflected in his behaviour and in his acts. We have had many proofs of this, in diverse conditions and places.

The retreat of our little ones really represents a temporary separation of their group (entirely dedicated to the sacred preparation) from the rest of their

[1] We give the name "cycle of work" to the series of actions performed by the child when, according to my method, he spontaneously chooses his work from the apparatus put within his reach.

school companions, who are engaged in various tasks, and are therefore capable of involuntarily disturbing them in their interior occupation. But it is not a life of complete sacrifice and absolute interior recollection that is expected from them ; they are left free for their own little amusements. They are to be seen for the greater part of the time in the garden, amidst the blossoming flowers of May, picking little bouquets or scented grasses which they carry to Jesus. The doves come quite near to them, and pick up the seeds thrown down by their little hands. During the class instructions they are quietly entertained by interesting lantern slides of sacred persons, places and events. Illustrated books and copious collections of picture cards are at their disposal. Much time is spent in preparing the table for dinner, in clearing away, in washing up the dishes, and in putting everything in its proper place. The making of the Rosary, which begins with the choice of the necessary objects and the picking out of the silver beads, provides restful and interesting occupation. Then at times, prayer breaks forth as a necessity—little processions are organized in the garden ; the singing of a hymn is readily undertaken. Zeal in bearing in mind all that is necessary ; examining the conscience to discover the faults to be warded off in order to make fair and white the house where Jesus is to dwell ; the joy of forgiving and loving even those who have hurt them—such are the flowers that rise almost spontaneously from hearts imbued with the spirit of the retreat. It is possible for the child to feel spiritual exaltation. The birth of the Baby Jesus

in the humble stable with the shepherd visitors, the triumphant ascension of Jesus into Heaven, after the crucifixion, make a greater impression on the child than any other episodes of the divine life.

On the morning of the great Saturday the Church is adorned with flowers brought, the evening before, by the school-children, many of whom work hard arranging candles and flowers. Only the parents, who, in Spain, are accustomed to take part in the ceremony, almost with the pomp of a betrothal (in fact they give the children in sign of their espousals with Jesus, a ring, which, after Communion they continue to wear on the ring-finger of the left hand) are admitted to the Chapel, while the communicants dressed in white, with a monastic simplicity and severity, carrying their silver rosary, wait in a room far away from the chapel. Their companions, from whom they have been separated for about a week, and who had assisted them throughout the preparation, go in solemn procession to greet them, and conduct them to the Altar. The priest, in his sacred vestments, holding aloft the crucifix, leads the way. He is followed by two acolytes in surplices, with big candles, and behind them, come all the children of the school, carrying lighted candles. The procession sets forth from the Altar, passing between the rows of parents and proceeds, singing, to the room where the waiting communicants hear the strains draw near, and see the long line of lights approach. Then the procession returns : this time immediately behind the Cross come the First Communicants, and following them their companions, still carrying the lighted candles and singing until

the former reach the Altar where Jesus awaits them.

The emotion aroused by this act of homage and love, has touched the hearts of priests, and the custom of going for the Communicants and accompanying them processionally to the Altar with hymns of joy has already been adopted in various religious institutions in Barcelona.

The afternoon is occupied with a religious feast, beginning with the Litany of Our Lady which the children intone on the Terrace, while the parents and their numerous friends and acquaintances answer from the garden. Then follows, with various stopping places a procession, in which all the children, dressed in white, take part, the bigger children carrying lighted tapers, the smaller, little white lilies, some bearing on their shoulders a little statue of the Infant Jesus resting on a bed of fresh flowers, others holding a banner of Our Lady.

III. SOME MINOR DETAILS ABOUT RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Reading Exercises

According to my method, for the very young children who begin to read words (about the age of five) we use small black cards on which are written words in white : these cards are placed beside the object represented by the name (little toys). In order to group together the names of a series of homogeneous objects, boxes are used, into which are put the things chosen for this purpose, and the cards with the corresponding names. These are, in general, the first reading exercises. We thought of using a similar proceeding, not only to teach words relating to the Liturgy, but also better to fix the

idea, and to attract attention to such objects which can then be more easily recognized in Church—for example, Mass, Chapel, Baptism. In each box should be placed the objects (and the cards with the names) connected with the subject. Thus they learn the essential requisites and persons for each Sacrament, the different parts of the priest's vestments, the principal personages of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, the necessary objects for the Altar for the celebration of Mass, etc. These toys must be expressly made. The exercise consists in taking out of the box and in placing in line the various objects, then looking in the group of cards for the corresponding name, and putting it beside the object.

By frequently repeating the exercise, not only is a knowledge acquired, but the attention is prepared to follow the religious function.

Even children of over five years of age, and those who are preparing for their First Communion may employ some time (during the retreat) in similar exercises.

Everything is prepared with great exactness by a priest (Dr. Battle) and the objects are limited to what is exactly necessary, *i.e.*, to the essentials for the validity of a sacrament, etc.

It is easy to imagine how these playthings are able to attract the interest of the children; whole scenes can be constructed—Matrimony, Extreme Unction, Baptism, with little dressed dolls, candles, missal, baptismal font and so on.

Such games are much more varied than the customary play of to-day with little tin soldiers, and they have in themselves the direct aim of teaching

careful observation, reading and spelling. In the Chapel, the priest explains all the Sacraments, making the children take active part in ceremonies, whose object is instruction, as bride and bridegroom, as witnesses, as dying persons, as recipients of Baptism or Confirmation.

The toys so used, afterwards serve for individual exercise in thinking about, repeating and learning what has been taught. The child is free to choose the exercise and to entertain himself with the various objects.

IV. STUDY OF CREATION

One of our aims was to help the child, by making him observe created things, to raise his thoughts to their Creator. It is well known that very suitable work for children is the cultivation and intelligent observation of flowers. The growth of living things, the phenomena they present, their metamorphoses are generally considered useful aids in developing an admiration for nature.

Our intention, however, was to find amongst natural phenomena those most apparent and most striking, and to limit their number, as we do in all the didactic material which we offer to the child.

The principles adopted for the education of the senses are as follows : Isolate the sense ; choose a few stimuli to be presented separately, and let these be attractive and different, so that the attention may be held, and the power of observation be consequently developed.

The same principles were applied in the choice and selection of plants and insects.

Our research work, for various causes, was not complete, but a few examples will give an idea of the principle. The primula conica (with little red flowers) must be watered every day, and if a child forgets for even one day the plant withers and fades.

The agobe can live on rock without ever drying up : it is sufficient to water it once a week.

The red lily of Ceylon changes its flower.

The cittorium folguera changes the colour of its leaves which become white, etc.

A very ingenious thing devised by Dr. Battle was an astronomical observatory for the children. They can daily observe the sun through a tube which assumes the dignity of a telescope ; attached to the observation tube are a thermometer for measuring the heat of the sun's rays, a prism for decomposing the light, and finally a dial which marks the movement of the sun.

As well as the above-mentioned material, the object of which was to arouse admiration for the Omnipotence and Providence of God, the Reverend Dr. Battle conceived the idea of choosing from Sacred Scripture, especially from the Psalms, phrases in praise of nature, and of collecting them in little books, *e.g.*, on the sun, on the heavens, on plants. Hence the lofty inspiration given by nature to religious souls was brought within reach of the child in the majestic poetry in which it is expressed. Short anecdotes of the Saints and of their love of nature are in process of being collected ; without mentioning St. Francis of Assisi, there is, for example, the story of St. Paul of the Cross (which makes a great impression on children) who

NATURE STUDY

A group of children watching some caterpillars in a cage.
L.C.C. School, Mellitus Street, W.12

OPEN-AIR MONTESSORI CLASS, L.C.C. SCHOOL, MELLITUS STREET, W. 12

is said to have turned pale with emotion, while his heart beat faster at the sight of flowers.

These notes on our experiments in religious education represent only an attempt—but they already show the practical possibility of introducing religion into the life of the child, like a rich fountain of joy and grandeur.

THE ATRIUM OR CHILDREN'S CHAPEL

DR. MONTESSORI is well aware that her work in Barcelona, described in the last chapter, is only a beginning. She herself modestly speaks of it as "un tentativo." She hopes some day to complete the work thus begun, and has already mapped out the lines along which she would have it develop.

Should time, opportunity, and means concur at some future date, and she is able to carry out the work, she will doubtless write a full account of it herself. In the meantime there are many teachers who are anxious to apply her principles without delay to the religious education of the children under their care. For these Dr. Montessori has authorized the Editor to publish the substance of a series of conversations which he had with her, in May, 1927, on this subject. We have written down the matter in an informal manner, without vouching for verbal accuracy, very much as it developed itself in conversation.

Question : "In your method you have prepared the environment of the child in such a way as to stimulate the development of the natural faculties : what sort of an environment would you prepare to correspond with, and draw out the development of the *super*-natural faculties ?"

DR. MONTESSORI: "Such an environment already exists. It is the Church. What is the Church if it is not a specially prepared environment for drawing out and sustaining the super-natural life of man?"

Question: "But speaking practically, as a teacher, how would you set about giving what is called 'religious instruction'?"

DR. MONTESSORI: "People are constantly asking me about this question of religious instruction—whether it should be long or short, determined by the teacher, or left to the choice of the children, and so on. They nearly always speak of it as if it were a special school 'subject.' My answer to all this is that I should not regard it as a 'subject' at all. The preparation of the child for his full participation in the life of the Catholic Church is a much wider thing than the learning by heart of certain intellectual truths. *It is a life in itself.*

"Perhaps I can make myself more clear by comparing it with the condition of things in Protestantism. Led by Luther, Protestants took the Bible as the last word in religious matters—as the final authority. And therefore since Luther's time, and largely as a result of his influence, the reading of the Bible has come to be looked upon as *the* important thing for the Protestant to be able to do. Hence in religious training learning to read became the important thing. This has made it possible for Protestants very largely to combine religious and secular education. Indeed it often happens, nowadays, that a child is given no *special* religious education at all. He has been taught to read, and, thus qualified, his 'liberal' parents allow him to

choose his own religion for himself. But in order to become a good Catholic it is not nearly so essential to know how to read. In fact there have been, and still are, countless good Catholics who have never learnt to read at all. But to become a good Catholic there are on the other hand a number of things that one must learn how to DO.

"The child, for instance, must learn how to make the Sign of the Cross, how and when to genuflect, how to carry decorously objects such as candles and flowers without making a noise. He must be taught how to prepare for the Sacraments of Penance and of Holy Communion, and how to participate in these Sacraments. He must be taught how to follow the actions of the Mass, how to take part in processions, and, in general, how to participate in the liturgical ceremonies of the Church, as far as it is possible for the layman to do so. All these are things to be *done* rather than things to be *read*.

"In all such matters it is important that the small child should be most carefully instructed, so that he shall feel 'at home' in God's House. No one would dream of going to a ceremony like a ball without having learnt what to do, and how to comport oneself at it. Similarly it is necessary that little children should be prepared for the life within the Church. And all this requires as a preparation not so much the learning to read as a *preparation of self*.

"Now if you consider a little, you will see that many of the child's activities in the ordinary Montessori school form in themselves a valuable preparation for this *active* participation in the life of the

Church. The training in muscular control, the careful deportment, the carrying of objects without shaking them, the discipline of the 'silence game,' the care and respect for material objects, the respect on the part of the directress for the interior life of the children, and, in general, the superior value of deeds to words—these are all activities which only need to be, as it were, lifted to a higher plane to acquire a new and deeper meaning."

Learning by Heart

Question: "But how about the Catechism? Would you not have any learning by heart?"

Dr. Montessori: "Yes, of course I would have certain things learnt by heart; but I would have the memorizing come *at the end, as a summing up after the experience.*"

Question: "What do you mean by 'after the experience, at the end'?"

Dr. Montessori: "I mean something similar to the manner in which our children become acquainted with the definitions of geometric forms. You know how the children occupy themselves with the geometric insets in our schools. They take them out on their sockets and run their finger-tips round the edges, thus getting a tactile as well as a visible impression of the various forms. They also take different kinds of geometric forms out of their drawers at the same time and mix them together. Then by comparison and contrast they sort these out again, putting each back in its right socket. All this is genuine experimental work, often involving trial and error; and by this means

the children become more and more familiar with the various geometric shapes. So that when they come to learn the exact definitions, one can truly say that the learning by heart comes '*at the end, after they have experienced them.*' "

Question : "What parts of the catechism would you have the children learn by heart ?"

Dr. Montessori : "That I could not, naturally, decide myself. They would have to be selected by some one in authority who would also be responsible for the wording. The important thing would be to have these statements *very exact.*

"It would not be necessary, in my opinion, to learn *all* the catechism by heart ; only certain necessary and accurate definitions, such as it is essential for every Catholic to know. Nowadays there are so many people who talk such a deal of sentimental rubbish about religion that it is imperative that every child should have something clear and logical to fall back on. One cannot, unfortunately, enjoin silence on all these ' loose thinkers '—more's the pity!—so one must learn to distinguish between their vague ideas and exact definitions.

"In Italy some of the Cardinals have made up catechisms for the use of children—different ones for different ages. I am quite confident that, by teaching children religious truths according to the method I have indicated, we should be able to show that our little ones had grasped the truths as well as, if not better than, older children taught on the usual methods."

Question : "To go back for a moment to what you said about the children learning things by heart

—after they had experienced them. I can see how this can be managed in a subject like geometry, but I do not quite see how you are to make it work in the sphere of religious knowledge ?"

Dr. Montessori : "For this it would be necessary to have a special material, appealing to the senses, working on the same lines as our 'didactic material.' The children would learn by means of objects and actions."

Question : "Would you have this 'religious apparatus' mixed up with the ordinary didactic apparatus of the Montessori school, or would you keep it separate ?"

Dr. Montessori : "I would keep it separate. I would have a separate room specially dedicated to the 'supernatural life.' Everything in this room would have a bearing on the spiritual life, and the general effect would be that here the soul of the child and all his activities would be centred in the Life and Personality of Our Lord. The work in this room would of course include : Bible History, the study of Doctrine, Church History and the Lives of the Saints, and of course the Holy Mass."

Question : "Do you not think it might create an artificial sense of separation in the child's mind to have all the religious material kept separate from the rest—as though the supernatural life could not go on just as well in an ordinary schoolroom ?"

Dr. Montessori : "No, I do not think it would have this effect at all. In our adult life the Church or Chapel is a place specially devoted to the supernatural, which with its prepared environment helps on our spiritual life ; but this does not *prevent*

us from having supernatural inspirations at other times, and in places which are not so specially set apart.

"It would be better to have a room specially devoted to the religious life, because such broad distinctions are a help to the immature intellect, and form the basis of more detailed subdivisions (*cf.* pp. 123-4). It would, of course, be possible to have the natural and the 'super-natural' apparatus all in the same room, just as it is possible to eat, sleep, work and play all in one room, though it is better to have separate rooms."

Question: "Then would you consider a school like Miss ——'s, though it is equipped with all the usual Montessori didactic material, and in the hands of an expert directress, really incomplete as a means of helping a child to its full development?"

Dr. Montessori: "It is complete enough from Miss ——'s point of view. She is not a Catholic and has no clear conception of the Super-natural Order. She is busy with the development of the *natural* faculties of the child, and therefore she does not feel the need of another room for the 'super-natural.' People who spent their whole time sleeping would only need a room fitted with beds!"

Question: "Would not this idea of having a separate room for the teaching of religion be looked upon as rather unnecessary and new-fangled?"

Dr. Montessori: "People might think it was a new idea, but, as a matter of fact, it is a very old idea—almost as old as the Church itself. In the Early Church there was, indeed, a special room called

Photo by D. L Stewart.

NOTRE DAME MONTESSORI SCHOOL, DOWANHILL, GLASGOW

Learning the names of the vestments worn by the Priest at Mass, and also of other objects connected with the Holy Sacrifice. The children have to place a card with a name on it next to the corresponding object. The Directress checks the work afterwards and rectifies mistakes if any.

the *Atrium*, generally adjoining the Church, which was used for the training and instruction of Catechumens. It was—as you might say—a sort of ante-room to the Catholic Church, both in a literal and a metaphorical sense. Here, as in so many cases, we can, with great profit, take 'leaf out of the book' of the Early Church.

"This room then—which one might call the Atrium—would be set apart for the preparation of little children for their full participation in the life of the Church. It would not simply be a question of teaching them their catechism, but something much broader and deeper. This room would be a place where the religious sentiment would be born, and nurtured—where the children would be quite free in the expression of their religious instincts.

"Just as my first schools in Rome were called 'Children's Houses' (Case dei Bambini) so one might call these 'Children's Churches.' Not of course in the sense that they should form a substitute for the real Church—which would be absurd—but because everything in them would be directed towards initiating the children into the true life of the Church."

QUESTION: "Supposing that money were no object, how would you build your Atrium or Children's Church? How would it be furnished? and how would the children occupy themselves in it?"

DR. MONTESSORI: "That is rather a big question. Well, first, I would try and find some architects and artists who understood the child spirit; and I would get them to give of their best.

I have no patience with the idea that because children are very young they can be put off with the second best. I would have the room built in an ecclesiastical style, with pointed windows, which would be adorned with sacred pictures. The windows, of course, would be very low, down to the children's level—like everything else in the room. There would be statues, here and there, of Our Lord, Our Lady and the Saints ; and the children would bring flowers to put in front of these images, and also light candles before them. On the walls would be sacred pictures illustrating Old and New Testament stories. The whole room would be fitted up as a sensorial environment calling out to the souls of the little children. As in an ordinary Montessori school, round the walls would be cupboards and shelves with various exercises and occupations for the children to work at."

Question : " What sort of occupations would there be in this Atrium ? "

Dr. Montessori : " My principle would be that in this room *everything that the children learn and do in the ordinary Montessori school would be repeated on a higher plane, super-naturalized, as you might say.*"

Question : " Could you give some examples of what you mean by this ' super-naturalizing ' of the activities of the ordinary school ? "

Dr. Montessori : " Well, you know what we mean in our schools by the ' exercises in practical life '—how the children are taught to take great care of their environment—how they dust the apparatus and so on. Now they would do the same

here. With an even more loving care, they would busy themselves dusting the sacred statues and pictures, the little altar and its furniture, and all the other objects in the Atrium.

"Then again, as we have already mentioned, the little ones would feel that the skill they had acquired in carrying a glass of water without spilling it would have gained a new value and significance when they carried vases of flowers to place in front of the Holy Images, or carried a stoup full of holy water. As you know, too, when they walk round the line they have to carry a little bell, and carry it so carefully that it does not ring; so now in preparing their little altar as for Holy Mass or Benediction they will feel a new significance in their power to do this, as they carry the little 'Sanctus' bell and place it without a sound in its position at the foot of the altar.

"I would arrange, too, that the children should often have little religious processions, carrying flowers to place at Our Lady's feet, or at the foot of the Altar; and here again the marching while carrying things, which is a regular part of the ordinary Montessori school routine, would acquire a new meaning.

"In a similar way the 'Silence Game'—in itself so full of mystery and awe—would now become the prelude to the still more wonderful silence of prayer and meditation.

"Even the decimal system, with which the little ones have just become acquainted, can be made use of here, in the counting and arranging of beads to make rosaries. There is a stage (when the little ones are just acquiring the notion of number)

when they are interested in anything that has number and can be counted. At this stage they will begin quite spontaneously to count all sorts of things, such as the number of persons in the room, or the number of books on a shelf. It would be a simple matter to devise different exercises, of varying degrees of difficulty, in which they would be able to make use of their newly-won knowledge of number. They could begin with simple numbers as the five loaves and two fishes, the twelve apostles, the seven churches, the number of years in Our Lord's Life and in His Ministry, the number of candles used at Low and at High Mass and at Benediction. Coming to more difficult numbers, they could express numerically, with the aid of the number apparatus, such facts as the number of Sundays in the year, the different subdivisions of the liturgical year, *e.g.*, the number of Sundays in Lent, or after Pentecost, etc.

" They could use the ' thousand chain ' as a chain of years, and, by counting off the thirty-three years of Our Lord's Life at one end, they would be able—by marking in the centuries with number cards—to gain a clear idea as to the length of the Church's history (comparing it too with the ephemeral life of heretical sects). These are only suggestions, but one could find many facts in connexion with the Church and its history which have a numerical significance, which would be specially interesting to the children at this stage.

" In the Montessori School the children are busied at a certain stage with the colour tablets. These exercises give them an intense interest in

colours ; and everything that they see in their environment which has colour attracts their attention. One little child, for instance, at this stage went up to a visitor and solemnly informed him, 'Your coat is brown.' Another said to a lady as she came into the room, 'Your dress is exactly the same shade as a flower in the next room.' It would be a great joy to the children, at this particular 'sensitive period,' to be given the little models of the liturgical vestments, in order to recognize their different colours and learn the significance of each.

Music, of course, would play an important part in the life of the Atrium. I would have the children taught how to sing the old Gregorian chants, and also the old hymns which have been handed down as folk-songs.

"You know that our children have a special musical apparatus, made of bells, for learning the notes of the scale and their names. In the Atrium, too, I would have a set of bells, but here I would have them arranged as a little belfry, like a miniature church tower. The children who had already learned to play little tunes on the other bells would be allowed to use these at certain times. They would be used for calling the others to prayers—as at the Angelus, and on other occasions. These bells would be useful, too, in other ways. I would ask a priest to come and explain to the little ones the ceremony of "Blessing the Bells." He need not necessarily actually bless the bells, but it would be easier for the children to understand the ceremony with these objects before them. They could also copy out some of the passages from the

prayers used at the Blessing of Bells, which are very beautiful (*e.g.*, " May the sound of the bells drive away dangers, prevent storms and tempests from harming us ; may their voice increase the devotion of the faithful and rouse them to eagerness in hastening to their church, there to share in divine worship").

Reading and Composition

" Many of the children in the Atrium will be at an age when they are just learning to read. For these I would devise the same kind of exercises as I have done in the ordinary school. As at Barcelona, I would have little cards made out with names written on them. These would correspond to various small objects which would be kept in sets in boxes, each set being accompanied by a small packet of cards with the names describing them. The child would take the objects out of a box, place them out on the table, and then read the little cards, placing each under the object it denotes. One set—for the smaller children—might contain such objects as : a cross, a lamb, a rosary, or little figures representing Our Lord, His Mother, St. Peter and so on.

" Another set would comprise the various objects used on the altar, *e.g.*, a Chalice, a Monstrance, a Corporal, an altar cloth, a candlestick, a crucifix, a burse, and so forth. The different vestments worn by the priest at Holy Mass would form another series; whilst still another could be made of the various things found in a church, such as a baptismal font, confession box, lectern, altar, pulpit, etc. Pictures mounted on cards could be used where it was not possible to obtain suitable models."

Reading Slips

" It would be a good thing also to make use of ' Reading Slips ' such as the children have in our schools. These reading slips, as I expect you remember, are in the form of little commands which the child on reading has to execute himself. The little one struggles eagerly and voluntarily with the difficulties of reading because it knows that—when it has wrested the meaning from the sentence—it will be amply rewarded. The reward lies in the joy of carrying out the action suggested by the card. To these little children, just beginning to read, it seems a great mystery that those small cards can, as it were, come to life and give commands like a living person."

Question : " What kind of actions would these reading slips command the children to do ? "

Dr. Montessori : " In such an environment as there would be in the Atrium, it would not be hard to find many things for them to do."

Here are a few examples :

1. Go to the statue of the Madonna and Child and throw a kiss to the Baby Jesus.
2. Put a flower in the vase in front of the statue of a Saint.
3. Go to the Holy Water stoup, and very devoutly make the sign of the cross.
4. Go to the crucifix, kneel down in front of it, and tell Jesus how sorry you are that your sins have made Him suffer, and that you will always try to be good.
5. Go to a statue of an angel, think of it as your

guardian angel, and thank him for looking after you. Ask him to pray for you.

6. Go and kiss the hem of Our Lady's robe, and say a "Hail Mary."
7. Take off your shoes before a crucifix, as Moses did before the burning bush, "because it was holy ground."
8. Go to a prie-dieu and say an "Our Father" for the Pope's intentions.
9. Take the big wooden cross and carry it round the room on your shoulders. As you do so think of Our Blessed Lord carrying His cross to Calvary. Make an act of contrition, kiss the cross, and put it back again in its place.
10. Make a little drawing of a boat with St. Peter in it. What does the boat stand for and why do you put St. Peter in it?

Those are only suggestions (by the Editor) of the sort of thing one could do; probably each directress would make up her own.

"As the children get older I would encourage them to write little compositions on Biblical subjects. Not indeed that they will need much encouragement; for it has often been proved that little children *prefer* writing on these subjects as their little hearts are so full of love and faith.

"Everything to be super-naturalized! that would be my aim. To take another example. It is part of the recognized equipment of a Montessori school that there should be a little washstand with soap and water and towels. The children are given the most minute instruction how the ceremony of washing and drying one's hands is best carried out,

URSULINE CONVENT, WATERFORD, IRELAND
Instructing children in the objects of the Liturgy by means of models

CONVENT OF MERCY, WATERFORD
A "Crib" made out of a chocolate box and also painted by the child herself. She is writing a description of it in Irish

Now in the Atrium I would have this same action (of washing of hands) done over again, but with an entirely new significance. I would ask the Priest to come and very carefully go through the action of the Lavabo, as it is done in the Mass, explaining to the little ones the significance of the ritual, and teaching them to say the prayers. After that I would have the Bambini go through the action themselves, repeating at the same time, the words that accompany it."

Manual Work

"Manual work would form an important feature of the Atrium. There would be a little carpenter's bench for the older children, where they would make little wooden models. At different times of the year they could make models appropriate to the particular liturgical season. Thus at Easter they could make a little cross, at Christmas a crib. It would be a good thing if a number of them joined together in making a more complicated model—as the Temple at Jerusalem, or the Stable at Bethlehem. There would also be plenty of scope for weaving, clay-modelling and embroidery. All these things would help to make the children understand the kind of life Our Lord Himself lived as a child; for I would have the little ones realize that the religious life is not a thing apart from ordinary every-day life; but is *one complete life which includes and takes up into itself the common things of life*. This is one of the reasons why I should like the children—as far as circumstances and climate permit—to do as we did at Barcelona, where they grew their own

wheat and grapes, to obtain the bread and wine to be offered up in the Mass of their First Communion (see p. 12). It is a good thing anyhow for children to take care of plants and watch for themselves the mystery of growth ; but this activity takes on a still higher purpose when the materials they have helped to produce are to be offered up in the highest act of worship—to be changed into the very Body and Blood of Our Lord.

" I would also have the children become acquainted with the other *elements* which are used in the sacramental life of the Church—*e.g.*, salt, oil, water, olives, incense, etc. As we did at Barcelona I would have the Priest go through the ceremony of Blessing the Water, and the children could afterwards copy out parts of the prayers, *e.g.*, " Fill this element of water, O God, with Thy power and blessing that it may be endowed with divine grace to drive away devils."

" Water indeed is such an important element in the life of the Church—being used in Baptism, at the Lavabo, in Holy Water and in the holy rite of the Mass itself, as well as at other times—that I would have it much in evidence. I would have a little fountain in the garden with a pond containing fishes. The children themselves would look after the fishes, and I would have a little tablet near the pond—a replica of one of the ancient inscriptions from the Catacombs—showing the fish as the symbol of Christianity."

Question : " Where would you have your pond ? "

Dr. Montessori : " In the cloister garden. You told me that expense was to be no object ! So,

adjoining the Atrium, I would have a special garden for the children. The ideal thing would be to have the school arranged like a monastery round a little cloister. The Church could be on one side, the Atrium on another, and on the other two the ordinary schoolrooms. I would have statues at the end of the cloister-walks where the children could place flowers. The children could play in the cloister garden, and I would like a tree in it with a little house up in the branches into which the children could climb, as they had in one school I visited in California.

"In this garden I would like the children to keep as many as possible of the 'Evangelical Animals and Plants.'"

Question: "What do you mean by the 'evangelical animals and plants'?"

Dr. Montessori: "I mean the various animals and plants that play a conspicuous part in Bible history and symbolism. For instance I would like the children to have a pet lamb to remind them of the 'Lamb slain from the foundations of the world.' They could have a dovecote and keep doves, because of the two turtle doves Our Lady offered up at the Temple, and the dove that was sent out of the Ark, and also because the dove is the symbol of the Holy Spirit. They could keep bees, too, and have some candles made with the wax their own bees had made. These could be blessed and placed on their school altar.

"*Nature study* would form an essential element in the work of the Atrium. In my description of our work at Barcelona I have indicated the reason

for this, viz., that from the observation of created things the child's mind should be raised to their Creator. As the Psalmist says : 'The Heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament showeth His handiwork.' "

The Walls of the Atrium

On the walls of an ordinary Montessori school you see numbers of cards hanging up, some containing little poems, some lists of spelling examples, others the "Parts of Speech," and so on. The children are constantly reading these and spontaneously copy them down. Similarly in the Atrium, besides the sacred pictures which I have mentioned, I would hang up a variety of cards. These would be tastefully prepared, written in beautiful script, and embellished with ornamental designs after the manner of the old monastic manuscripts. They would include such writings as :

a. Sacred mottoes, such as one sees written on the walls of churches or on the altar, *e.g.* :
  "Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus."
  "Tota pulchra es Maria," etc.
b. Definitions of the Sacraments.
c. The Works of Charity.
d. Acts of Faith, Hope, Charity, etc.
e. The Fruits of the Holy Spirit.
f. The Confiteor.
g. The Lord's Prayer.
h. The Hail Mary.
i. The Gloria.
j. The Apostles' Creed.

"To some of these sacred inscriptions I would

assign a more conspicuous place than on the wall. The '*Ten Commandments*,' for instance, I would have actually engraved on a slab of stone, which I would place on a little stand or lectern, specially made, so as to be just the right height for the children. Next to this lectern I would have a statue of Moses—preferably a small replica of the one by Michael Angelo—and behind and above it a candlestick with the Seven Candles.

"On a similar stand, beside a statue of St. Peter, I would place the '*Commandments of the Church*'; and, on a third, beside a statue of Our Lord, the '*Commandments of Our Lord*.'

"The children would have these writings on the wall and on the lecterns constantly before them, and at a certain stage—when they are learning to write—they would spontaneously and with great enjoyment copy them out. They would keep their copies in a special folio, as they do the multiplication tables which they have themselves worked out, and would use them, like the latter, for learning by heart."

Instruction on the Holy Mass in the Atrium

As Dr. Montessori is at present engaged in the preparation of a children's Missal, her ideas as to how best little children should be taught to understand and participate in the Holy Mystery of the Mass, will be only cursorily touched on here.[1]

Suffice it to say that the Dottoressa regards this matter of such importance that she would arrange

[1] *The Mass Described and Explained to Children*, by Maria Montessori (Sheed & Ward).

all the work of the Atrium to be, as far as possible, Misso-centric. "For," she says, "just as all the child has to learn in the various multiplication tables is found in, and summed up by the 'Table of Pythagoras,' so all that is essential in Christian instruction is, in some way or other, connected with or summed up in the great central rite of the Mass."

This may seem a strange statement to Protestant readers, but that is because they do not realize the significance of the Holy Eucharist to Catholics. For the Mass is, as it were, the meeting place and summing up of many different lines of thought and action. It may indeed be compared to a diamond with innumerable different facets, so that from whatever point of view it is subjected to the light of thought, it reflects back a fresh significance. Thus, historically, it may be regarded as the consummation of the Old Law, and the beginning of the New Testament. It is the Sacrifice of the New Law, daily offered up for the sins of the world. Looked at in another way, it is a marvellous epitome of the Birth, Life, Death and Resurrection of Our Lord. In the prayers and readings of the book of the Mass (*i.e.*, the Missal) the Church has preserved for us the most beautiful hymns and prayers of the Saints, and the very quintessence of the Scriptures. In the ceremonies and setting of the Mass, all the arts—music, poetry, painting, sculpture, architecture, even the drama—have given of their best to pay homage to the Supreme Artist. The common elements of life—bread and wine and water are taken up in It as essentials ; and the most precious

products of the earth—the spices of the East, gold and silver and precious stones—are added thereto in the vain hope of making a setting worthy of the Eucharistic miracle. The Mass forms the common focus of our collective worship, but is at the same time to us, as individuals, our Daily Bread. But It is not only the meeting place of all Catholic worshippers on earth ; for, in the Holy Sacrifice, the Church Militant is united to both the Church Triumphant and the Church Suffering—the Angels and Saints in Heaven fall down before the Sacred Host on the Altar, and the merits of Him Who is offered there are applied to the Souls in Purgatory.

These are only some of the aspects from which the Holy Mass can be considered. They can all be summed up in the saying that in the Mass we have Emmanuel—God with us. Here, in sacramental form, we have the continuation of the sublime mystery of the Incarnation. And this is why the Mass is, and has always been, the central dynamo from which there streams, as from an inextinguishable source, the undying energy and vitality of the Catholic Church. It will be readily seen then why, believing all this, Dr. Montessori regards this subject of such importance, and would make it so prominent a feature of the life in the Atrium.

Use of Models in the Atrium

Question : "Would you approve of the use of little model altars for the children to learn about the Mass ?"

Dr. Montessori : "Yes, we had them at Barcelona. I think these models may be very

helpful so long as they are used in a proper way."

Question: "What do you mean by a proper way?"

Dr. Montessori: "Well to begin with, the model altar must never be confused in the child's mind with the real thing. The models should only be used for *learning the names of things and their uses*. They must never forget, for instance, that a real altar contains an altar-stone with some relics of the Saints, and that a priest could not say Mass without such a stone.

"Care should also be taken that the child's preoccupation with the model altar does not degenerate into a mere game.

"In this connexion, too, I would recommend the use of the cardboard models, published by the Liturgical Apostolate (Abbaye de St. André, Belgium). These have been made to illustrate the different actions of the Mass, showing the positions of priest and acolytes at the important moments of the Mass.

"In the Notre Dame Montessori School at Dowanhill, Glasgow, the Sisters have a series of beautiful models, representing the various 'mysteries,' such as the Annunciation, the Nativity, the Crucifixion and so on. The children take these models from the cupboards where they are kept, and place them on the floor. Then with the Montessori movable script alphabet they make up in their own words on a rug on the floor a little description of the incident portrayed. Such models would form desirable parts of the 'environment' in the Atrium.

DR. MONTESSORI with some of the pupils of the Convent of Mercy in Waterford on the occasion of her first visit to Ireland in 1927. She is holding an address of welcome in her hands The large letters "B" and "S" are the first of two series making the words "Benvenuta Signorina"

"It would also be a good thing to have models of the ancient Tabernacle, the Temple of Solomon, a Church, or a Monastery, with a little description written out for the children, and cards with the names on them, which the children could place, from memory, on the various parts of the models.

"I think it is very important that children should be made interested in the history of the Church. I would have little stories and pictures specially composed revealing the characteristics of the Early Church—its simplicity, its fervour and its heroism. I have a great admiration for the work of one of the Benedictine Fathers in Rome. This Priest takes the boys, under his charge, to the Catacombs, explains to them how they were used by the Early Christians. He goes further than this for he actually celebrates Mass there, as was done in the Early Church, and his boys assist at it. We should do everything we can to revive the spirit of those early times.

"As in those times, I would have the children follow as far as possible the actual words and ceremonies of the Mass, and not content themselves with reading special books of devotions. The latter may be very good in themselves but they can never take the place of the actual words of the Mass."

A Special Dress for the Atrium

"In an ordinary Montessori school the children —when they come into the school—very often put on little smocks or pinafores to work in. I would have the same in the Atrium, but specially designed. I would make the children wear little coloured smocks like the one the child Jesus wore. Some

would be red, to commemorate the martyrs ; others white for purity; and others green, which is the commonest liturgical colour. The little girls would wear a small veil like a Spanish mantilla ; and the little boys would have a cowl attached to the top of their smocks at the back. On the shoulders of each of these garments would be worked a cross to symbolize that the Christian must carry his cross—big or little as the case may be—in his daily life. For even the children have their crosses to bear, sometimes much heavier than we are inclined to imagine."

The Life of the Atrium

" Thus it will be seen that the work of the Atrium would be a much broader thing than merely ' teaching the child his catechism '—often with the avowed aim of making a good impression on the Diocesan Inspector, or the Bishop ! It will rather be a life complete in itself, something which will affect the children at all points. It will be like a surrounding and pervading atmosphere in which they will live and move and have their being."

The light which illumines that atmosphere and gives it warmth is Our Lord Himself, Who said, " Let the little ones come to Me." Here, as in a little religious community, these virginal souls " yet streaming from the waters of baptism " will be free to expand in all their simplicity and purity, giving full expression to the ardent faith and intense devotion of childhood.

The whole trend of modern psychological research is to emphasize the permanent effect, for

good or ill, of impressions in early childhood. How could these little ones, therefore, better prepare themselves for the struggle against the paganism of to-day and to-morrow than by being—in these formative years—"Bambini viventi nella Chiesa"—Little children living in the Church?

THE SPIRITUAL TRAINING OF A TEACHER

"But above all these things have Charity."

A TEACHER must not imagine that he can prepare himself for his vocation simply by acquiring knowledge and culture. Above all else he must cultivate within himself a proper attitude towards the moral order. Of vital importance in this preparation is the way in which we regard a child. But our subject must not be approached from its external aspect only—as if we were concerned merely with a theoretical knowledge about the nature of a child and methods of instructing and correcting him.

Here we must insist on the fact that an instructor must be prepared *inwardly*, and must consider his own character methodically with a view to discovering any defects within himself which might prove obstacles in his treatment of the child. To discover defects that are already rooted in the conscience, some help will be required, some *instruction*. Thus for instance, if we want to know what is at the back of our eye, we must get somebody else to look and to tell us. In this sense the mistress must be *initiated* into her inward preparation. She is too much occupied with " the wicked tendencies of the

child," and "how to correct its naughtiness," and "actions dangerous to the soul, caused by the remnants of original sin which are in the child," etc.

Instead of this she should begin by looking for her own bad tendencies and defects,—"first take out the beam that is in your own eye, and *then* look for the mote in the eye of the child." This inward preparation is not concerned with "seeking one's own perfection" after the manner of those who enter the religious state. It is not necessary to become perfect and free from every weakness in order to be a teacher. A person who is continually preoccupied in trying to improve his "inward life" is probably unconscious of those defects which make him incapable of understanding a child. And that is why it is so necessary to be properly directed and prepared to be a teacher of little children.

We have within our souls numerous bad tendencies which develop like weeds in a meadow—the result of original sin. These tendencies are manifold: let us say they can be summed up in seven groups—the seven deadly sins. A child is more or less free from sin: not only is a child, compared with ourselves, purer, but it has certain pure, occult and mysterious qualities, generally invisible to grown-up people, in which however we must faithfully believe because Our Lord spoke of them with such clearness and insistence that all the evangelists wrote, "Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven."

The teacher must be able "to see the child as

Jesus saw him." A teacher is one who can rid himself of all the obstacles which make him unable to understand a child : he is not merely a man who is always trying to improve himself. Our instruction to teachers consists in pointing out to them which states of mind need correction, just as a doctor would diagnose a definite and particular illness from which a human organism is suffering or in danger. Here, then, is *positive* help :

" The moral defect (*peccato mortale*) which arises in us and prevents our understanding a child is *anger*."

And, since no moral defect acts alone, but is always accompanied by, or combined with, other defects—just as Eve was joined by Adam as soon as sin made its first inroad—so anger is mixed up with another moral disorder, which appears less ignoble and is therefore the more diabolical—pride.

Our bad tendencies may be corrected in two ways : One, which is within us, consists in the struggle of the individual who, clearly and intelligently recognizing his own defects, voluntarily tries to overcome them with all his strength and purge himself of them, seeking the help of God's grace.

The other is a social corrective, which is to be found in external environment. We might point out how the resistance of external things, opposed as they are to any outward manifestation of our bad tendencies, must arrest their development. External opposition has considerable influence. It is, one may say, the chief reminder of the existence within us of any moral defect, and an external reminder

which leads us in some cases to think about our inward state and then actively to set about our inward purification, if we really wish for it.

Let us consider these deadly sins : our pride is modified by others' opinion of us ; our avarice by the material circumstances of life ; anger by the attitude of those stronger than ourselves ; sloth by the necessity of working for our living ; luxurious habits by social customs ; gluttony by the limited possibilities of procuring superfluous things ; jealousy by the wish to appear dignified. There is, no doubt, behind the above conditions, the desire of the individual to overcome his faults. But those external circumstances are a definite and continuous reminder which is quite salutary. In short social control affords a great support to the moral equilibrium of our personality.

We, however, whilst conforming to these social codes do not feel ourselves pure in the sight of God. But whilst our souls conform willingly to the necessity of correcting the faults which we ourselves have recognized, they adapt themselves with difficulty to the rest of the process—the humiliating one of being controlled by others—so that we feel even more humiliated by the fact of having to give in than by actually having done wrong. When we are made to restrain ourselves, and there is no way out, our instinct of worldly dignity induces us to make it appear that we have ourselves chosen what was really inevitable. The small deception of saying, " I do not like it," about something which we cannot have is one of the commonest moral traits. We resist resistance with a small deception,

and so enter a battle-field rather than the road to perfection. And, as in every struggle, we shall soon feel the need of organized fighting. Individual deeds are strengthened by becoming collective. People who have the same defect, before giving in to the external causes which would go against them, are led instinctively to triumph over these by the strength of union.

Nobody would dare to say, for instance, that the equal division of wealth would be displeasing to the rich because they are avaricious or slothful ; but they would say that such a distribution of wealth would benefit everybody, and is necessary for social progress ; and although one may hear many rich people say that they would be resigned to it for the common good, there is a tendency to disguise our vices under the pretext of noble and necessary duties, just as during the war they concealed the places where there were trenches and mortal dangers with a camouflage of flowery fields. The weaker the external things which are opposed to our defects, the more time and leisure we have for constructing our camouflage and fortifications. If we penetrate a little further into these ideas we shall come to the conclusion that our vices are more fixed than we had thought, and that the devil can easily insinuate himself into our subconsciousness by suggesting that we should hide our real selves from our outward selves. This defence, not of our lives but of our evil tendencies, is the mask which we readily put on, calling it " necessity," " duty," " general advantage," etc., so it becomes daily more difficult to free ourselves from this sort of thing. Confusion arises

NOTRE DAME MONTESSORI SCHOOL, DOWANHILL, GLASGOW

Objects used for various Church ceremonies (all quarter size)

from the fact that we are now convinced that what our conscience once suggested to us was really false, is now true.

And now the mistress, or whoever wishes to educate children, must be purged of those errors which would place her in a false position with regard to children. She must realize clearly what is her prevailing defect ; and by this we refer to more than one single defect—to a combination of disorders which are allied to one another : pride and anger.

Anger is one of those failings held in check by the determined reaction of others. It is one of the things that proves how difficult it is for one man to be subjugated by another. Therefore he is a prisoner when he meets a really strong person. A man is ashamed of showing anger before others because he at once sees himself in a humiliating position ; that of having to retire by force.

It is therefore a real relief to be able to mix with people who are incapable of defending themselves or understanding ; people who believe everything as children do. Children not only forget our offences immediately but feel themselves guilty of everything of which we accuse them. Thus it was with that holy disciple of St. Francis of Assisi, who wept believing himself a hypocrite, simply because a priest had told him so. The teacher is here invited to reflect carefully on the serious effects of such a state of things on the life of a child. A child's understanding would not see through the deception ; but its spirit feels it, and is oppressed and often

warped by it. Then the childish reactions appear which really represent an unconscious self-defence. Timidity, deceit, caprice, the frequent weeping, which they seem to justify, nightly frights, any form of exaggerated fear—and similar obscure things—represent the unconscious state of defence of a little child who has not yet sufficient reasoning power to understand the real conditions of its intercourse with grown-up people. On the other hand anger does not necessarily imply physical violence. From the crude and primitive impulse which is generally understood by this word complex manifestations may be developed. A psychically developed person conceals and complicates his inner states of evil. Indeed, anger in its simplest form only shows itself as a reaction to some open resistance on the part of the child. But in the presence of the obscure expressions of the child's mind, anger and pride are interpenetrated in a complex mass, assuming the precise, tranquil and respectable form which is called tyranny.

An oppression which is not disputed places the tyrannous person in an impregnable stronghold of authority and recognized rights. The fact of being adult makes him right to the child, just because he is grown-up. To discuss this question would be to make an attempt on a state of sovereignty which is recognized and sacrosanct. In the society of grown-up people a tyrant used to be recognized as the elect of God. But to the child a grown-up person represents God Himself. It is outside discussion; in fact the only person who could discuss it is the child, and he remains silent. He accommo-

dates himself to everything, believes everything, pardons everything. When he is punished he does not try to justify himself, and willingly asks the pardon of any angry person, forgetting to inquire how he has given offence.

Sometimes, too, the child will do something to defend itself, but this defence is hardly ever a direct reply to the act of an adult, but a vital defence of its own " psychic " integrity, or, indeed, the reaction of a repressed spirit.

It is only when the child is growing up that he begins to direct his defences with discernment against tyranny, but then the adult finds reasons to justify himself, and helps himself, by entrenching himself more and more behind his camouflage, even succeeding sometimes in convincing the child himself that it is for his good that the teacher becomes a tyrant.

" Respect " is paid only by one side : the weak respects the strong. An offence on the part of the teacher is legitimate ; he can judge the child unfavourably, speak ill of it, which he does openly, even going so far as to strike it. The needs of the child are directed and suppressed by the teacher at will, and any protest on the part of the child is an insubordination which it would be dangerous to tolerate.

Just as some peoples have succeeded in believing that everything will be secured to them through the benevolence of their sovereign, so children believe that they owe everything to the benignity of the teacher. Or, rather, it is the teacher who believes it, who, in his pride, has convinced himself that he

has created everything that is in the child : he makes him intelligent, learned, good, religious ; that is to say, it is he who has prepared the way necessary to put him in communication with his surroundings, with man and with God. This is a fatiguing mission. The renunciation of the tyrant completes the tyrant. There never yet was a tyrant who confessed to having sacrificed his subjects.

What our method asks of a mistress as her preparation is that she should examine herself, and purge herself of the defect of tyranny, eradicating the ancient mixture of pride and anger with which her heart is unconsciously encrusted. She must cast off pride and anger and first of all become humble before she can put on Charity. That is the state of mind which she must attain. This is the central point of equilibrium without which it is impossible to advance. This is the inward " preparation," the point of departure and arrival.

This does not imply that we should approve of everything the child does, or abstain from criticizing it, or do nothing to help the development of its intelligence and feelings. On the contrary, we must never forget that the whole point of the argument is to educate, to become the real masters (" *maestri* ") of the child.

What is called for is an act of humility ; we must pluck from our hearts a rooted prejudice, just as the priest, before ascending to the altar, must recite his " Confiteor."

Only thus it can be done, not otherwise. It is

not the helpful education of the child that we must abolish, but the inner state of our souls which prevents us from understanding him.

The teacher who is preparing himself inwardly by putting on charity differs from a person who is just trying in a general way to acquire that sublime quality. Charity, as described by St. Paul, includes all the highest perfections of Christianity. But the teacher must study that part of charity which is indispensible for his particular mission. Here, too, he needs a guide to direct him towards these special points.

A searchlight which concentrates its light and turns it on to a distant object—that is how one might describe the kind of charity necessary to a teacher.

It is obvious that a religious soul who is constantly seeking for perfection, and consequently for charity, will more easily direct his searchlight so as to illuminate the child mind. Yet it is true that the most vigilant and enlightened soul, with his light spread over everything, might yet pass near a child without having the special outlook of a teacher.

The charity which helps people to become teachers of little children is that which shows itself in the child, the goodness which the child itself succeeds in showing. Teachers and all those engaged in education are, however, more inclined to see evil so that they may check it at once in the most effective and thorough way. It seems rather as if in that alone consisted all the essentials of a moral education. In this way the roots of good which are

beginning to sprout in the child's soul may remain unrecognized and denied.

An unobservant person might often believe that it was he who had sowed the seed of good in the child's soul, and be blind to many delicate and child-like expressions of goodness, just as one who suffers from daltonism is blind to certain colours.

Instead of this the teacher should prepare himself to recognize goodness ; for it is towards goodness that all the help of education must be directed.

AN ILLUSTRATIVE ANECDOTE

The Dead Dog

A dead dog had been lying for several days in a sunlit street of one of the cities of Palestine. A group of people had collected round the disgusting object. Some said : " It is horrible " ; others, " It is monstrous," and kicked it away. A youth passed that way and stood a moment to look, then said, " What beautiful little teeth ! "

And, in fact, the dog's teeth still remained white and shining. Somebody asked, " Who is that young man who can see beauty in this dead body ? " And the reply came—so runs the legend—" He is called Jesus, and He is the son of a Nazarene carpenter."

This short story illustrates a sensibility capable of seeing good wherever it may be found, even if it is something quite small and hidden away. Such a sensibility is allied to the perfect love of which our Master, Jesus, was the Exemplar. And that love, which lights up everything, we call " charity."

We must not confuse this kind of charity with vague forms of optimism. It does not make us regard all existing things as good, but only what is really good, and on that account, to be clearly distinguished from evil. Our Lord did not see the dead dog as a beautiful object, but He saw the one beautiful thing that remained amid corruption. In the same way the eye of a great artist recognizes at once a really precious object, even if it is small and mixed with many ugly and vulgar things ; whilst, on the contrary, an uneducated person, insensitive to beauty, might regard the ugly things as pleasing, and be blind to the beauties of a real work of art.

The kind of goodness to which everything seems good, and evil non-existent is, therefore, something totally different from the charity which is necessary to become good teachers of the young.

The Cornfield—An Illustration

In a field of ripe corn the ears seem at first sight all alike, but on looking carefully one notices several kinds of corn and, especially, that some ears are more beautiful than others—they are full, and bent with their weight. The grain of these, when ground, not only gives more flour, but a very white flour, especially rich in nutritive value. Not only that, but these ears of superior quality are almost immune from the disease which are liable to attack the weak and inferior corn.

Cultivators have only recently become aware of these important facts, and have busied themselves in selecting the better kinds of grain and discarding the

inferior, with a view to cultivating only the best kind in their fields.

The result, however, cannot be attained as easily as appears at first sight, for the better grain requires more care to make it grow ; and that is the reason why so little of this variety grew in ordinary fields. To make the kind of corn with heavy ears flourish, the earth must be intensively cultivated with special manures ; and only by preparing a new and perfect medium can intensive culture succeed in getting a field uniformly covered with this valuable and wonderful corn. If the intensive care of the field is in the least neglected, the beautiful ears begin to dwindle and get lighter in weight and finally become diseased. " This is degeneration," thought the agriculturalists who had sown the field entirely with selected seed. But the biologists, led by de Vries (*The Theory of Mutations*) have given an " experimental " explanation of the above phenomenon. It was not a case of " degeneration." Grains of the poorer quality had remained hidden in the earth of the field, and had not sprouted because the ground was intensively manured in such a way as to vitalize the large seeds which, so nourished, prevent the growth of the inferior seeds ; and these, smothered by the stronger kind, remain concealed and latent, with no room to germinate. But it is well known how corn can survive ; even if it does not sprout properly it still remains alive and capable of germinating. Thus, when the cultivation of the ground was neglected, it happened that the large grains, which required a great deal of manurial nourishment, could not grow, whilst the old seed, which did not

The girl in the foreground is studying "Fractions," the boy behind her is doing a Grammar Exercise.

Note the child on the left at the table counting along a bead chain ; the girl opposite is using a number frame.

need so much, grew quite easily. And the more the grower neglected the land, the more the inferior seed, poor and sickly, found its chance of living and springing up. The grower who had sown his seed entirely with the strong-growing grains could not explain the appearance of so many kinds of inferior corn. But the bad seed which was sown had persisted, awaiting its opportunity. Superior grain cannot live poorly, it needs a great deal to make it grow. Thus we see that it is not sufficient to have good seed without the necessary care of the environment. Good seed and bad seed are always there : the cultivation of the good is more difficult, but when it finds the conditions favourable it overcomes the bad and gives prodigious results. Want of care does not leave the field barren, for, in the place left empty by a heavy ear, light ears spring up. Good conquers evil or evil conquers good. The field is always full either with good growth or bad.

The fact is, therefore, that if good things are not nourished we suffer not only from the lack of them but also from the presence of worse things.

In a neglected field, or in one short of water, there is not only the absence of good tender grass, but also the presence of rank nettles, intruding all the more where the vital conditions for good grass are wanting.

And it happens also with the soul somewhat as it happens with the cornfield and the meadow. Progress in agriculture began with discovering and studying the best ears, and then solved its problem by procuring the necessary things for their cultivation.

There will not be a good harvest merely by exterminating the inferior plants. The surest way of keeping down the bad seed is to encourage the growth of the good.

The sudden extermination of evil is not a thing to be recommended ; this is clearly taught by our Divine Master : it is better to let tares also grow, than to destroy the good grain along with them. The key to the problem is, therefore, not to destroy evil but to cultivate good.

The Two Fans (An Allegory)

We may now illustrate the same principle in the case of two folding fans with long handles, which, when closed, completely conceal the central part or web, but which, when open, spread it out into a circle.

The two fans, one black, the other transparent, light blue and silver, are half-open ; the blue semicircle—light and glittering—is at the top, whilst below is the black one, solid and heavy. The handles, by which the fans may be manipulated without touching the folding part, are placed one upon the other in the same horizontal line. We will represent Good by the transparent, luminous fan which is spread above, and Evil by the black fan which is below—heavy, opaque, very visible and tangible.

If the bright fan be opened further it not only becomes larger, but at the same time limits and shuts off part of the black fan. And *vice versa*: if it is the black one that is opened the result is not merely an augmentation of the dark part, but also a diminution

of the bright part. If the whole of the luminous fan could be opened it would totally eclipse the black one. However, between the two blue handles turned towards the earth, the whole of the black fan would be still there, packed together and compressed.

If, on the contrary, the black fan should be completely opened, the beautiful slender fan would not completely disappear, but, folded together with the handles closed, it would seem to point out Heaven to the dark, triumphant fan.

Both remaining present, and both touching in the same space, this manipulation of the fans represents the changes in the struggle between Good and Evil. Even in the soul nearest perfection through the complete triumph of good, there is still suppressed evil; whilst there is no soul, even one apparently steeped in wickedness, which does not enclose a fan of light, compressed, but turned towards heaven like a lightning-conductor which calls out to God for Grace. The two webs are thus separated to form two different things, and the handles seem like a double dividing-wall. Fusion is not possible—only the prevalence of one over the other.

The acquisition of one good quality is at the same time the conquest of a bad one, and every evil quality which triumphs has overcome a good one.

There is a double gain and a double loss which yet do not call for a double act. There is no doubt that the easiest and most natural way of overcoming evil is to let it fold up and close, by developing good, and not tear to tatters the resistant and solid part of it.

No one ought to be more careful to cherish the

luminous fan of good than the teacher. Even if he should forget the black part, he would yet have the wisdom to suppress it, and would possess the simplest and most practical secret of success. Nothing could better illustrate the existence of these two irreconcilable elements than the conception of "Justice" relatively held in the earthly, and in the celestial world. Justice, in the earthly sense, is something which causes fear ; it concerns itself with evil, and signifies punishment for a gross offence. Whoever breaks human laws feels the "terror of justice"—Justice is a cruel tribunal, a prison, a hard chastisement, a long torment. He who has not committed sin feels no fear. Such a one would say, "I have nothing to do with justice"—that is to say —for him justice does not exist, he has nothing to do with it, and it does not concern him. And he is proud and satisfied to live without ever having anything to do with justice. . . . Such expressions are in contrast to another conception of justice. The word "justice" signifies something high, something noble, something for which every soul hopes. Everyone repeats with a sigh of longing "Justice will be done to me. . . . My hope is in justice."

What is this justice ? This kind concentrates on goodness. It has no material tribunals ; it is a light of faith which assures to each one of us a reward for every good action we have done. Nothing escapes God's justice, which takes account of every good deed we do, and compensates us for every ill done us by others. If one really thinks that the only justice which exists is the gloomy justice of this world, and if all hope of heavenly

justice were lost, then the soul would feel like something heavy which sinks into hell.

Hell is the loss of God.

How have we been able to remain under the mistaken impression that a child should be judged according to the evil which he does, and that his education should be directed according to the gloomy standards of "human" justice? When Jesus was teaching us about love, he pointed to the child as an example for us, and as a guide to the Kingdom of Heaven.

SOME GENERAL PRINCIPLES WITH REGARD TO THE INSTRUCTION OF CHILDREN IN THE MASS

ONE of the greatest steps forward in the religious education of children was that of introducing them to liturgical practices in such a way that they might participate in them with full knowledge.

From that moment the question of a missal for the children, and their preparation so as to be able to follow the Mass, assumed an importance parallel to that of their instruction in the Catechism—which, previous to the great reform of Pius X, was almost the only thing left to them.

But in the practical carrying out of this new step forward the ordinary methods of education of our time have been used ; that is to say, the adult has still looked upon the personality of the child from the same point of view as he regards his own. The continuous and direct intervention of the adult with the child has been regarded as necessary in order to deter him from disorderly actions, supposing the child only capable of good through the exhortation and example of the great. Even so did people think at the time of Christ ; when the children approached the divine Master, the adult drew them

back. So much so that Jesus was obliged to admonish them, saying, " Let the little ones come unto Me." Moreover Our Lord was moved by this action to one of His moments of severity, and made of it the occasion for one of His divine revelations, " Verily I say unto you, that unless ye be converted and become as one of these little ones, ye shall not be able to enter the Kingdom of Heaven."

Jesus perceived in the children something which the adult of 2,000 years ago—like the adult of to-day—does not perceive, while in the Gospels it is clearly affirmed that there are many mysteries which will be revealed to babes and sucklings.

The teachings of Jesus with regard to children touched on a point which is central for their education ; viz., that the child has a personality different from ours, and in him are to be found spiritual tendencies which, in the adult, have now been hidden under a hardened crust.

This idea must constantly be present with us, in order that we may be disposed to offer to the child the highest things ; and not only so, but that we may offer them in an elevated manner.

We should assist the child by giving him the religious knowledge he needs ; at the same time, however, not forgetting that the child can help us by pointing out to us the way of the Kingdom of Heaven. A great respect for the personality of the child should form an essential part of our most profound Christian sentiments, while the practical application of this sentiment should be a characteristic refinement of every religious teacher.

We may hope much from the spirituality of

children ; let us not forget that His Holiness, Pope Benedict XV, during the European conflagration, placed at the beginning of an encyclical letter—to be read to the faithful in every church throughout the world—these words : " I pray that the all-powerful children may stretch out their hands to the altars."

What is therefore of great importance to us adults, in this question of the liturgical education of the children, is not only the manner of our teaching them the necessary things, but also the preparation, in our own souls, of a greater sensibility.

We are, it must be confessed, still far enough away from the attitude of mind which should be ours. It is too common a thing to hear in church harsh, and therefore injurious words addressed to the child : " Keep still ! don't be such a nuisance ! " " You're not attending, you naughty boy." Many lay teachers lead into church files of children, dragooning them about like a sergeant-major with a set of new recruits under him. " Down, on your knees! not that way, all together! "; or you may see a teacher seizing the children by the shoulder, and shoving them, one by one, into the pew, as though he were putting fruit into a basket.

Another evident mistake is that of teaching during the divine office. It frequently happens nowadays that one meets in churches meritorious persons who have laid on themselves the mission of assisting and instructing—during the divine office—these groups of children, or even of older boys (who may be already doing Algebra at school or making

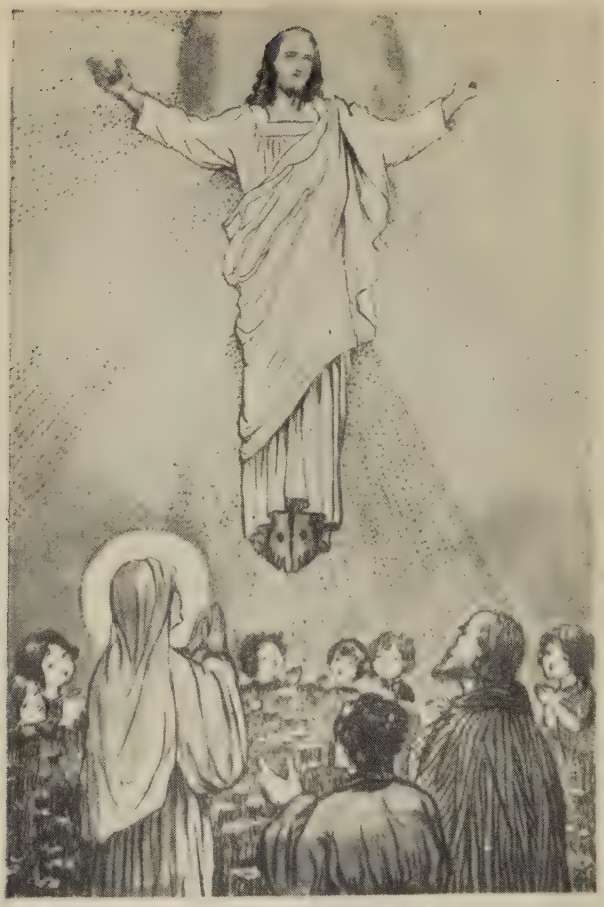


Illustration from "Little Children's Thoughts and Prayers on the Rosary," by Sisters of Notre Dame, Glasgow (Sands & Co., 1s. 6d.)

commentaries on Dante). During the Elevation—a time of silence and inward recollection—behold there resounds the voice of the zealous teacher, voice without harmony or expression, explaining loudly, in the tone of one who performs an arid duty, what the Elevation signifies, and what sentiments it should arouse in the hearts of the faithful. The lesson finished, a loud "sit down" recalls to their seats the youthful platoon, in whom —though with the best of intentions—all spontaneous uprisings of the soul have been suffocated.

Certain errors of a similar kind are to be found in many of the little books on the Mass composed specially for children. These books are overburdened with instructions, whether in the words or the illustrations, which things attract the attention of the child, absorbing all his energy. Anyone reading one of these books is bound to have his attention caught by the appeal of the illustrations, which point out the positions of the officiating priest—now situated on the right, now on the left, now turned with his face to the altar, now turned instead to the congregation—and is obliged to put the words of the text in correspondence with these attitudes.

In addition to all this there are also found, in some of these little books, illustrations representing the symbolical significance of the various actions which form part of the rite : that represents the Birth of Jesus, this His Ministry, that other His Death and Burial. Now we have all experienced how difficult it may be genuinely to follow the Mass even when we are accustomed to so doing and almost

know the words by heart. How then is it possible to follow it and be instructed in it at the same time?

May we not say that the purpose of the Mass is that we should participate in the mysteries, abandoning the soul to God in that state of inward recollection which is only made possible by shedding for a moment from our minds all external wrappings? It was for this reason that in early Christian times the catechumens were sent away at commencement of the mystical parts of the Mass. For it was considered that it was not meet that they should receive instruction in an exterior act at a time when they should be united with Jesus Christ in the most intimate offering of the soul. Instruction and participation in the mysteries are two very different things and should remain separate.

The first subdivision of the Mass into parts is precisely this :

The Mass of the catechumens and the Mass of the Faithful.

And this is of very great significance.

It is not necessary that the child should be a sage in order to follow the Mass, but it *is* necessary that he should be spiritually free. That is to say, instruction in, should not be confounded with the practice of the cult.

The missal should be, then, for the child as well as for us a simple reproduction of the liturgical text ; and the part containing the instruction should be reserved for the " Atrium," at another time than that of assisting in the rite itself.

That the children's missal should be a reproduction of the liturgical text is already agreed upon by the vast majority of those who are researching, at the present day, to elevate the religious preparation of the children.

But to do this effectually the disposition of the sacred liturgical text should be arranged in a manner accessible to children : it is just here that the main problem of a children's missal remains to be solved. That text, though immutable, might however be adapted to the child in the manner in which it is offered to him ; in the way in which it is analysed and graduated ; above all in the manner in which it is made to arouse, concurrently, the corresponding activity of the child himself, for it is now admitted that it is the activity of the child that brings out the best that is in him.

THE NEW MISTRESS[1]

INEXPERIENCED teachers generally attribute immense importance *to lessons*, imagining that their own preparation ends when they have presented the material in the right way. The truth is far otherwise : the mission of the mistress is much more important than this. She has to direct the development of the child's soul. The limited rôle of a simple observer of children is quite different. Such a one does not aim at *knowing* the children, but simply *helping* them.

It is, then, useful to know certain fundamental principles capable of aiding this work of direction. The chief thing here is to be able to recognize those states of polarization of the attention which we have called *Concentration*. When the child is wrapped up in attention to his " great work," the mistress must respect this attention ; she must not interfere either by correction or encouragement. It is *then* that she must absolutely observe the principle of non-intervention. Certain teachers have absorbed this principle off-hand, *en passant* as it were ; they have told themselves that all they have to do is to distribute the material, then withdraw and be silent whatever happens.

[1]Extract from an article by Dr. Montessori in the *Call of Education*, July, 1927.

Result, frightful disorder in the school ! But non-intervention—the sign, that is, of respect for the child's activity—*is only appropriate when some interesting phenomenon is* taking place in the child's life ; it is quite out of place when disorder reigns and the attention of the child is all astray.

I have seen, in a school, disorderly children who took all sorts of material and used it in an absolutely wrong way. Amongst them glided, sphinx-like, the mistress, without words. I suggested : " Wouldn't it be better for the children if you went for a stroll in the garden ? " Whereat she started, going from child to child, speaking softly in the ear of each. " What are you doing ? " I asked her ; and she replied, " I don't want to disturb them ; so I whisper."

Her mistake lay in fearing to disturb disorder ! If she had feared upsetting order she would have been in the right.

A mistress once said to me, " You would have us respect the child's concentration as a very superior thing, comparable to the inspiration of an artist or of a man of science ? Why then, do you tell us we can interfere when the children play with the Didactic Material ? " " It is quite true," I replied, " that I respect the normal inner activity of the child as much as I do the inspiration of an artist, but *it is the inspiration and not the artist which calls forth my respect.* If I dropped in on the artist and found him sitting at home smoking and playing cards, I should not be afraid of trespassing, nor should I scruple to call to him, saying, ' My dear friend, why sit woolgathering here ? Come out for a stroll in the sunshine ! ' "

Our method does not insist upon respect for the futile or the erroneous !

As a fundamental thing, therefore, in her knowledge of the method, the mistress must learn to distinguish between good and evil. By Good, we mean—in this connexion—the psychological states favourable to the child's development, to his health of mind. By Evil, we mean the psychological states void of formative influence or actually unfavourable to his development, since they lead merely to a useless scattering of his forces.

Not only to school mistresses do we recommend this fundamental knowledge, but above all to mothers.

Without any doubt the mistress might well admonish the child somewhat briskly in order to get him out of this state of disorder. But a capable teacher possesses other and more efficacious means than force, although these means require sustained attention and persevering effort. One of the principles to be observed will be the minute supervision of the environment in which the child moves, which will become a veritable work of foresight and love.

As a wife supervises the arrangement of her husband's house so as to make it pleasant and attractive to him, so must the mistress busy herself about the child's surroundings. Constant attention is needed, and even this is not enough ; she must know all the child's needs. More still, she will work with her own hands to embellish the cradle of the new-born soul.

In addition to the perfect presentation of the

material, in addition to this fundamental psychological knowledge of the child, she must take the most minute care of the smallest details in the environment, keeping a continual watch over the objects it contains.

By the habit of observation the mistress will arrive at understanding, little by little, but clearly, what her mission is.

On this observation of minute details depends the order or the disorder, of the children ; on it depend the results she will obtain in her school. It is, therefore, essential that she should train herself if she wishes to arrive at the right observation of these details.

It would be easy to give an example of the serious consequences derived from errors apparently trifling. Let us suppose a house belonging to working-men in which baths have recently been added. If the tenants use these baths to store coals in, they can obviously not wash in them any longer. Not only will this be bad for the house, but the error, trifling if you will in itself, will result in a state of inferiority ; they will not be able to take advantage of the gifts of civilization placed within their reach. Thus going back to the teacher, she will obtain very small results instead of the great ones that were expected, disorder instead of order. The ability of the mistress in our method depends on the enlightened application of principles which inspire her to strive against little obstacles and thereby achieve great results.

Analagous to the way of spiritual perfection is the path the mistress has to follow. It is not that

the trifling venial sin overcome leads straight to perfection. It is rather that the soul, freed from these trifles, is capable of rising. The overcoming of the trifles has brought into play all the energies of life ; by the overcoming of the little difficulty an obstacle is removed from the path to perfect order. It is not the child himself that we take into consideration, it is the error that we have to track down. Our work is the dealing, not with the sinner, but with the sin.

Photo by D. L. Stewart

NOTRE DAME MONTESSORI SCHOOL, DOWANHILL, GLASGOW

Children working with sensory apparatus, e.g., Pink Tower, Colour Tablets, also Number Rods, numbers from 1-1,000, notation on Frame, etc.

ADVICE TO DIRECTRESSES[1]

I WOULD like, in the present number, to anticipate certain questions which are sure to be set by readers of *The Call* by a few suggestions which have been borne in upon me, in proportion as I have visited various schools and observed their mistakes. These errors, apparently trifling, are in their nature psychological rather than technical, and are concerned with small matters. These may appear to be very small, and are indeed so; yet nevertheless they are such that they succeed in preventing that full and harmonious development which every directress wishes to see reigning in her class. It is precisely because they appear to be so insignificant that they are so hard to detect and difficult to eliminate.

As they fall under four headings, I will divide what I have to say into four sections.

The Environment

The directress must not simply content herself with having prepared a suitable and agreeable environment for her class ; but this environment must remain the object of her unceasing care, because a great amount of her success will depend on this. The directress must therefore :

[1]From *The Call of Education*, Vol. II, No. IV.

(*a*) *Keep the material for the development in perfect order.*

If she neglects to do this the material will not interest the children, and will therefore lose its value ; for the whole essence of the Montessori Method lies in the spontaneous activity of the child, which can only result from the interest which it shows in the material.

(*b*) *She must take care that every object used by the children has a fixed place, and one which can be easily reached by them.* Thus, for example, the pencils, coloured crayons, the pens and the ink, etc., should be kept in such a manner that the children can find them easily without the assistance of the directress.

(*c*) *It is the order in which the objects in the environment are kept which teaches the child the idea of order.* The directress should therefore, in this respect, occupy herself rather with the environment than with the child and permit the former to teach the latter. To give an example. If for each little broom there is something to hang it on which prevents it from touching the floor, and therefore from getting spoiled, the children will quickly learn to put it away in this manner ; and if there is a special hook for every towel used, and if the towels are hung up in such a way after use that they will dry properly, the child will be interested in this order, and will learn to do the same.

Exercises in Practical Life

There should be exercises in practical life for all the children, corresponding to the age of the

child, passing from the easy to the difficult, the simple to the complicated.

Every directress should study to find out which are the exercises in practical life at once interesting and possible to carry out in her particular surroundings, and then draw out a list of them ; because, while the didactic material is in a manner fixed and absolute, this is not the case with the exercises in practical life. The latter vary according to the possibilities of the particular environment ; nevertheless they always remain a most important part of the work, *because they take the place of the formal gymnastic exercises of other methods*. For this reason, therefore, the exercise should be interesting and sufficiently difficult.

The Exercises in Practical Life should be done when they are necessary, at any hour, and not according to a fixed time table. For example, the children should wash their hands when they are dirty, sweep the floor when there is anything on the ground that needs sweeping up, etc. Many will object that, if this permission is given to them, the children will do nothing else but the exercises in practical life, and drawing. This is not so, and if such a situation comes about it is solely because the directress has not known how to present the material to the children in a manner which has rendered it interesting to them, or because she has given them work either too easy or too difficult.

The directress must not remedy this state of affairs by forbidding the exercises in practical life, or by permitting them only at certain times of the day. She must let the children work at these exercises if they want to,

even for the whole day if they wish it ; only she should make the other work so interesting that they will not wish to devote themselves exclusively to one thing. She should not, however, become alarmed even if the children give themselves up exclusively for several days to one kind of work : this is what we call an "*explosion*"; and this continuous application to one kind of work—*provided it is done with intensity, that is to say, with sincerity*—always produces the best results.

The directress should herself study to find out the best way of carrying out the exercises in practical life in order to be able, afterwards, to teach them with success to her children. She should point out every detail of the action with absolute clearness, and then leave the child the means of perfecting itself, without correcting it, even if it does it badly. *What is important is that the child should do the work itself* without a word, or any other assistance—even a glance—from the directress.

She must give her lesson ; plant the seed in the soil, and then slip away ; observe and wait expectantly, but not interfere.

Use of Material Corresponding to Age

The material must correspond to the intelligence and therefore to the age of the child in order to interest him.

If the material interests him, the child repeats the exercise, and this repetition of the exercise develops not only intelligence but also character ; therefore the progress of the class, as well as its discipline, depends on the interest of the children in their work. The directress should always bear

in mind the ages of the children, and the material adapted to the different ages, in order that she may be able to present to each that occupation which really interests him ; she should know the precise order of the progression of the material, though she need not always follow it. When, for example, a child comes to the school at a relatively late age, she should give to it the material corresponding to its age, *not that which precedes it, even though the child may never have had the elementary material in its hands.* Perhaps, later, he will turn back spontaneously and do the preliminary exercises after he has, as you might say, saturated himself with the work which has interested him.

To facilitate the task of the directress I will give here an outline of the material and the exercises which correspond to the different ages. I omit the exercises in practical life, which, as I have said, should be given at all ages, in degrees of difficulty and complication suited to the ages of the children.

Three years. The three series of solid insets, the "Pink Tower," the easy buttoning frames, etc., the "rough" and "smooth" boards, the first series of colour-matching.

Three-and-a-half years. All the buttoning and lacing frames, the first geometric insets, the stereognostic exercises, the broad stair, exercises in touching different stuffs, the long stair, all the colours for matching, the more difficult geometric figures, the first gradations of colours, geometric insets with cards, the first drawings.

Four years. Continuation of all the preceding exercises, colour gradations with all the colours, the

bells, all the geometric figures with the figures on the cards (with the teaching of their names also), geometric insets, with eyes bandaged, touching the sand-paper letters, counting with the number rods, counting with the spindles, odd and even numbers, touching the sand-paper numbers and learning their names, memorizing the numbers.

Four-and-a-half years. Making up words with the movable alphabet, much drawing, reading cards, first exercises in arithmetic with the number rods, learning the notes of the musical scale, reading.

Five years. Continuation of the foregoing exercises, especially exercises with the movable alphabet, writing, written sums in arithmetic, and reading.

Five-and-a-half years. Writing in ink, first exercises in musical notation, the grammar boxes, repetition of exercises with solid geometric figures, the three series of solid insets with the eyes shut.

The Intervention of the Directress

Many directresses intervene with the children's activities with prohibition, advice or praise, when they should not do so; and, on the other hand, hold themselves apart when such intervention is necessary.

The directress must not interfere with an action when the impulse that prompts it is a good one—neither with approval or assistance, nor to instruct or correct. Her intervention destroys this impulse, or at least causes the real "ego" of the child to remain hidden, which draws itself inwards like a snail into its shell.

I give herewith a few examples to illustrate these facts :

(*a*) A child runs up to some one and embraces him affectionately, but in a rough and awkward manner. Now if the directress chooses this moment to correct the child, and instruct it as to how it ought to salute another, the child will feel offended, or at least embarrassed and confused—to such an extent that, for a long time, it will not forget this disagreeable impression, and it will not wish to salute anyone, and may not, indeed, ever be able to salute anyone again in such a free and spontaneous manner. If on the other hand the directress recognizes that it is her fault for not having instructed the children properly, and prepares herself to give an animated and diverting lesson on the different ways of saluting another person, and gives this lesson several days later, the child will not feel itself offended, but will learn with pleasure how to salute another politely, without losing its affectionate spontaneity.

(*b*) A child is trying to wash a table ; not knowing how to do it, he does it badly. The directress chooses this moment to teach him how it ought to be done. The child loses interest, rubs the surface of the table two or three times with half-hearted interest, then leaves it and goes away. If the directress had only waited the child would possibly have discovered for himself how to wash the table, and would thus have perfected himself. But in every case the directress should choose another moment to give the lesson, that is to say, when there is no danger of destroying a good impulse.

(*c*) A child has not long been in the school ; he is small and very timid. Up to the present he has remained motionless at his place, looking round him

without interest in anything. To-day he rises: softly, softly, as though he were trying to hide himself, he goes to find his first work. The directress sees him, and makes gaily towards him to encourage him with a few words. The child feels himself discovered, is embarrassed, is indeed as much frightened by the approval of the directress as if she had given him a scolding. He is covered with confusion, returns hastily to his table, puts down the object which he had been seeking and remains there without using it. For another month, perhaps, this child will do nothing more, but will remain seated, looking around him, more depressed and more timid than ever.

(*d*) A bad-tempered and ill-mannered boy does an act of kindness to another child. If the directress seeing it, nods her head to him to demonstrate her approval, encouraging him to persevere in the good path, the child will feel a sort of shame at his first display of gentleness (which perhaps seems to him a form of weakness) and will do his best to suppress and conceal it in future—thereby becoming more unsociable and impolite than before. If on the other hand the directress acts as though she had not noticed anything, the child will feel a real pleasure in doing these little secret acts of kindness, and will perfect himself by continuing to practise them.

The directress should intervene and correct the children every time the latter commit impolite and disorderly actions, i.e., actions which do not spring from a good impulse or lead towards perfection. For example, when they :

(*a*) pass in front of other persons without asking permission ;

URSULINE CONVENT, WATERFORD. Exercises in Practical Life.

Left. Using the washstand—note the concentration. *Right.* Lunch in the class room : the children lay the tables, wait on each other, and clear away afterwards.

(*b*) drag chairs along the floor instead of carrying them;

(*c*) bang doors ;

(*d*) throw paper on the floor instead of into the waste-paper basket ;

(*e*) leave the table in disorder after working at it, etc.

The directress should not only intervene when there is disorder, but also beforehand to prevent it coming. She should therefore reprove those actions, which, without being disorderly, are useless; because these are actions which lead to disorder. For example : two children are playing together stupidly. If the directress does not intervene to direct their attention to something interesting and intelligent, after a few minutes other children will have joined them, causing a great disturbance and disorder. Or again ; a child instead of washing his hands, is playing with the water. If the directress does not intervene, in a little time the child will begin throwing the water at his companions, who will imitate him at this game, putting the whole class in an uproar.

These observations which I have made, one here and one there, on various occasions and with different persons, have always led—when pointed out to the teacher—to a great improvement in the class ; and this to the great astonishment of the directresses, who have often confessed to me that they would not have imagined that such a small thing would have so great a result. But it is precisely the little details which change a work of mediocrity into a masterpiece.

SENSITIVE PERIODS[1]

I WOULD like to draw your attention to one of the most interesting conclusions arrived at by the Dutchman, Hugo de Vries, in his classical experimental studies on the development of living things. It is this: that certain determining conditions in the environment are able to bring about different results if applied at different stages in the individual's development.

Conditions which are extremely favourable to development during a certain period may become ineffectual, or even unfavourable during a later period.

It follows that the moment through which the living thing is passing should be regarded in itself, and not in relation to the necessity of the life of the species, or—in other words—to the life of the adult individual. Actual development depends, not on a precocious orientation or adaptation of the infantile being to the completeness (*finalità*) of the species, but in the possibility of realizing the conditions of life necessary for the *present moment* of its own individual evolution.

Such conclusions do not concern themselves with a generic principle, but with a number of facts which have been established from the observation of the

[1]From *L'Idea Montessori*, June, 1927.

manner of development of the most diverse orders of living beings. When one speaks (in experimental biology, such as de Vries has described) of conditions in the environment, favourable at certain determined periods to the development of the individual and not at others, it must be understood that this is because the individual itself is different at different times. Not only has vegetative life generic needs which are diverse, but there are also different " attitudes " and different " sensibilities " which exist only for a period which will pass, and then become weaker or even disappear. In these periods, which de Vries has called " sensitive periods," the living being has, what one may call, creative and transforming attitudes ; and these instincts conduce appreciably to the realization of fundamental necessities on which the future of the species depends—and furthermore, these periods are such that, having passed, the possibility of such realization has passed with them. For example, it is known that the feminine sex of the worker bee is incompletely developed. Only the queen bee is perfect, but this condition depends on its nourishment. The *pappa reale* is that food which will assist the larva of the queen to reach its own particular development ; and, if this particular nourishment is wanting, the larva, destined to maternity, remains a worker bee. There is, in the life of the feminine larva, a sensitive period when it needs a certain food on which its whole future depends. If, however, this nourishment becomes accessible to the larva "when it has become too old," its own development is no longer possible ; for its growth has now preceded

too far towards the form of the worker bee; and it cannot come back. In this case the end of the " sensitive period " is clearly determined.

As an example of a sensitive period of another genus one may compare, with the above, the case of the larva (*bruco*) of the Porthesia, a very common species of butterfly. These caterpillars, when scarcely out of the egg, move towards the light ; that is to say, they have a definite sensibility towards the light. They live on trees ; and, being attracted to the most luminous part of the tree, they come into contact with the young leaves, which are tender enough to form their first nourishment. As soon, however, as they have absorbed a sufficiency of this tender nutriment and are able to digest tougher leaves, they lose this sensibility towards light. Thus they are now no longer obliged to remain always at the extremities of the branches, but are able to advance towards the darker parts of the tree where they find nourishment more adapted to their later development. The loss of this sensibility is therefore as necessary as its appearance.

My experiences with children have led me to describe in my books a large quantity of phenomena, which are strikingly parallel to the above. These are the periods in which children show aptitudes and possibilities in the psychical order, which afterwards disappear.

Thus, for example, they interest themselves with an extraordinary intensity in certain exercises, which one may in vain expect them to repeat at a more advanced stage. When their energy spurs

them on to concentrate on a particular exercise, they will remain at it absorbed for a long time, and display in the execution of it an accuracy and a patience which the adult would not be able to imitate.

It is during this sensitive period that a function can be more perfectly established, or an ability can be acquired in a more perfect manner. For example, it is only at a certain period that the sounds of a language can be reproduced to perfection, and thereafter established as a definite and perfect acquisition. Since, during this period, the child is near his mother, the language which results is called the "mother-tongue." In this period, however, any language whatever could be "fixed" perfectly—as we see in the case of children who have emigrated sufficiently early to foreign countries. In vain does the child of a later age, or the adult, tire himself out in trying to pronounce perfectly the sounds of a strange language ; in spite of all their efforts they carry in their accents the "stamp of a foreigner." On the other hand, the grammar and the rules of the new language are accessible to the child more developed in reasoning powers, because he is particularly interested in words and the construction of phrases ; and this is beyond the power of the little child. The boy will learn the spelling and the grammar of the new language successfully. It will, however, be rare if an adult succeeds in learning these things as easily and as well as the boy ; he will always continue to make mistakes in spelling and grammar.

If in education one takes into due consideration

these sensitive periods, one may sometimes arrive at results which are surprising, and, above all, contradictory to our prejudices concerning the uniform progression of the intellect, and our ideas with regard to fatigue in learning. When the child does exercises which correspond to the needs of his " present sensibility " he advances and reaches a degree of perfection which is inimitable in other moments of life ; and, even without fatigue, increases his own strength, and proves the joy which comes with the satisfying of a real need of life.

That is to say, he grows and is reinforced by his work, and is not consumed by it. Children who are able to commence writing at the proper age (*i.e.*, four-and-a-half or five years of age) reach a perfection in writing which you will not find in children who have begun to write at six or seven ; but especially you will not find in this later stage that enthusiasm and the richness of production, which has made us call this singular phenomenon " the explosion into writing."

There follows from all this, not only a putting back of the various things to be learnt to a younger age, but also a surprising efficiency in the results, in every exercise which occurs in its " sensitive period."

As soon as the Montessori Method began to be known, these facts prevented many persons from giving it due consideration. The so-called " miracles " of the Montessori children deterred cautious students from a serious examination of the Method. It seemed to them an absurdity to allege that smaller children should be able to accomplish

things which not even older children were able to do. In Holland, however, where the researches of de Vries had prepared the way for such observations, it was precisely this fact which aroused such interest—viz., the recognition and the utilization of the " sensitive periods " of the child. Especially Professors Fortuyn and Godefroy were supporters of it and made it known. I will conclude with the following quotation from Professor Godefroy.

" The term ' sensitive period ' to describe the phenomenon of a temporary and extraordinary sensibility of an organism to actions of a definite kind which relate to its own development, is admitted to-day amongst biologists on every hand. When one considers education put into harmony with the nature of the child the ' sensitive period ' reveals itself in a new light. We are in fact called to consider the origin of education on a natural plane, and to turn to the child in its more tender years. The instruction also of the adolescent reveals itself on new planes, because the adolescent also has ' sensitive periods.'

" We who are already acquainted with the idea of ' sensitive periods ' can affirm that the Montessori Method is based on just such a principle, is new and original in psychology and differs from all other systems. This also explains, up to a certain point, the success of the Method itself, and the possibility it reveals of obtaining results markedly different from other systems.

" Those who are not favourable to the Montessori Method ask, sceptically, what will become of the Method after a number of years, meaning to imply

that before long a new system will have taken its place.

" It is not difficult to make clear to such that the Montessori Method is founded on general characteristics of life, proper to all organisms, and that it will therefore last as long as life itself lasts. It is not possible to imagine that such a principle, having once been introduced into Pedagogy, could ever be abandoned."

Dr. Montessori amongst the Irish "Bambini" on the occasion of her visit to the Convent of Mercy, Waterford, 1927.

CHILD CHARACTER[1]

WE have chosen intentionally the title : " Child Character." By character, here, we mean not merely the traits of moral character but also the child's personality, which is not composed of separate moral, intellectual and physical factors but is a whole, and can be analyzed only in theory by psychologists.

We intend giving here a general survey of children's characters, of their activity which is so often not taken into consideration, and which is still more often misunderstood.

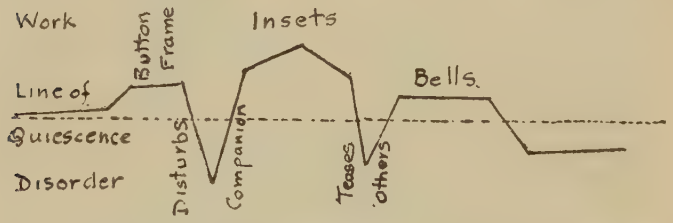
Suppose that the development of their work is represented by lines.

Suppose then that a horizontal straight line represents the state of quiescence. Suppose again that all the lines in the upper part represent orderly work, *i.e.*, " order," and those in the lower part disorderly work, or " disorder." Take a look at this scheme, and with this guide let us follow a child's actions in school.

Let us consider the different circumstances : the child enters the school ; he keeps quiet for a while, and then starts working. The line moves upwards into the division of " order." He grows tired and

[1] An address given by Dr. Montessori at Brussels, and published in *La Femme Belge.*

commits disorderly actions, and the line falls instantly into the division of "disorder." The child takes up some new work. He had, for instance, first taken up the Button Frame and now the insets. Up to this time he has been assiduous, but all at once he begins to hinder his neighbours, and the line drops; he amuses himself by teasing his comrades, and thus deliberately enjoys being disorderly. He then chooses the musical bells; he makes them ring; for a moment he will keep quiet and the line rises again into "order." When



Curve of a Disorderly Child Fig. A

he has finished this he will begin to annoy his teacher.

This line (Fig. A) would give us an idea of the daily acts we have just spoken about, and at the same time a diagram of the individual work of a child at school.

Such a diagram can demonstrate at one glance the development of a continued phenomenon which we might be able to follow, thanks to a law, provided one existed.

But in this line we do not see any law which is capable of interesting us in it; it is a diagram of

those many children who do now this, now that, without being able to fix their attention upon anything, and who handle in half a day all the material which suffice for a whole year's work. This is the type of a disorderly child.

We shall leave this child for a time, and after an interval we shall go back to the same child when we shall see that the phenomenon of concentration, namely attention, has begun to show itself.

Now I will give you the diagram of a child in the

Curve of a Child in transition stage

Fig. B.

transition stage, *i.e.*, no longer disorderly, but not yet quite orderly, a state we might consider as being just between order and disorder (Fig. B).

On coming into school the child chooses some simple work, very easy to himself, one or other exercise of practical life. He leaves it to take up from the material a familiar object, and repeats certain exercises. Then we see him get tired, restless, and his line falls under the line of "order." This may happen not merely with one child alone but also with a whole class. What would the inexperienced teacher say in that case? She would

conclude that the children were tired after having done exercises of practical life, or after having worked with the material, that the phenomenon of concentration has not shown itself, and that she is powerless to do anything.

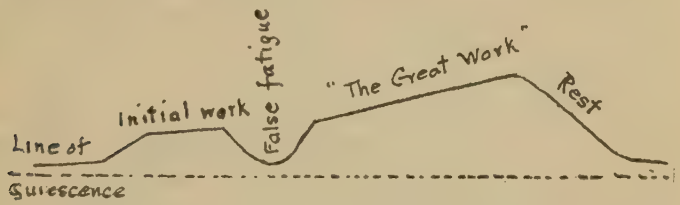
If the teacher is kind-hearted, she may conclude that the children need a rest, that she ought to stop their exercises or change their surroundings, and she will take them with her into the garden. You will see them playing in a " disorderly manner," filling the garden with their shouts, and when back again in the class-room, they will be much more restless than before leaving it ; they will do nothing but change about from one work to another, and their seeming fatigue will be as evident as before.

How many teachers have not said to themselves : " It is *not* a fact that free choice of work brings rest and calm to little children ; for I have actually seen them choose their own work and apply themselves to it for a moment, but yet their unrest grows ; it is of no use whatever to make them rest, or to take them to another scene ; I shall never succeed either in making them work or in giving them restfulness."

Such teachers have faithfully studied our method, but they have not had the required confidence in it to respect the child's freedom. And they cannot refrain from reasoning, from having recourse to their scientific knowledge, from interfering, from trying to direct ; and by doing so they interrupt the process of the phenomenon and thus they spoil all.

If, on the contrary, a teacher respects the child's freedom, if she trusts sufficiently to it, if she has a strong enough character to forget for a moment all

the science which aids her own intelligence, and if she be humble enough not to think that her interference will be of any use, she will then have the patience to wait. Then she will see this phenomenon : after the preliminary work, after the spiritual unrest of a child seeking in the depths of his consciousness where light has not yet appeared, he chooses a fresh, and to him difficult work ; he gives himself wholly to it; he becomes engrossed in it for a long time, devoting his whole soul to it; he isolates himself from his surroundings : this is what we call the "*Great Work.*"



Curve showing the "Cycle of Work"

Fig. C.

When finished, the child leaves the object alone which was the instrument of his concentration. Now he shows an entirely different character from that shown when he was supposed to be tired. Then he looked tired ; now his face bears a radiant expression ; calm and repose reign on his features, as if he had been given a strength-giving injection.

This makes us understand that there is one whole and complete cycle of work, composed of two parts —the first one being that of preparation or training, followed by the second one, the "*Great Work*" (Fig. C).

Let us compare the child with a hearty eater. He is hungry. Olives are brought to him, and then soup. In the child's case, he will not let himself be served with the hors d'œuvre—his intellectual aperitif—but chooses it himself, with an instinct which teaches him that before eating the substantial dish he must prepare himself for it.

After the soup comes the nourishing meat, and the person at table eats his fill. If a friendly neighbour were to see him eating his olives without eagerness and slowly drinking his soup, looking impatiently to the right and left, that neighbour might say : " This man has had enough ; he is tired and he wants to be off. I know what I shall do. I shall suggest to him a stroll in the garden."

Then they both go out, and, in passing, the neighbour gives the order to keep the roast for the next day. How embarrassing the stroll would be ! By what means could repose, cheerfulness and strength be brought back to the soul of the poor hungry man ?

If, on the contrary, the neighbour has more perspicacity, he will say to himself, on noticing the man at his olives and soup, looking impatiently round him: " This man is hungry, he is eager to eat his roast ", and he will take a real pleasure in seeing the other eat with a good appetite.

How many well-meaning people, anxious about the welfare of others, would say to themselves : " This man is eating too much ; I, who am familiar with anatomy and physiology, know that his jaw has to expend a force of several kilograms to reduce this slice of beef to chyme, I must stop him " : " Sir, leave your dinner, your jaw is getting tired."

Here is a case when we have to forget some of our science. After the "Great Work" the child is rested; one might even say that during it he was really resting! His radiant cheerfulness and his quiet repose, proclaim a new truth to us. As a matter of fact the child does not display the signs of fatigue after his "Great Work"; on the contrary the physiological characteristics indicate a super-abundance of vitality.

It is the same phenomenon which shows itself after a good dinner or bath, which are really exercises or work, which, instead of diminishing our strength, serve to restore our vigour; in the same way there is a psychical work which invigorates the spirit.

To enable the child to rest it is necessary to enable him to do the "Great Work."

As a matter of fact, what *is* rest? To us it does not mean being idle; our muscles do not rest when inactive, but only when acting normally. So psychical rest consists of an exercise which renders the intellect vigorous.

That is all as mysterious as the essence of life. A teacher cannot say: this child needs this or that work just now to be vigorous; that is beyond her power, for only the child is capable of choosing the work which suits him. Herein lies the respect due to the child's work and the confidence to await it.

The child that is rested is a merry, cheerful child, who will perhaps be disposed to confide in his teacher, because his soul has awakened and he is going to see in his teacher a person superior to himself. He now observes a great many things in

his surroundings which he did not remark before. Assuredly he has become richer, and hence even more open-hearted.

The diner, too, who has dined well, will greet a friend affably whom before dinner he might have passed by without even a glance. This need not astonish us.

Before being able to expend our forces we must first collect them. A teacher who would try to instruct a child morally weak or ill-nourished would find that child wanting in the power to come to her to confide in her and to obey her, and even were he to do so, it would be feebly and with difficulty.

Though it may seem strange, it is this way that we should teach children the manifestation of this inner wealth, without imparting it to them beforehand, as if these manifestations of inner wealth were something that could be learned.

Let us rather look for the way by which those inner forces develop, and as a result we shall see the same forces unfolding themselves abundantly.

According as these phenomena recur, and calm and rest develop, another complex phenomenon will appear which might be called *the discipline of the children*. Those teachers whose experience has taught them this point, comprehend the language of our schools. Thus one teacher will ask another : " How is your class getting on ? Is it orderly yet ? " and the answer may be : " No, not yet." Or one might hear a remark of this kind : " You remember that child who was always so disorderly ? He is quite orderly now." When teachers speak in this

Photo by D. L. Stewart.

NOTRE DAME MONTESSORI SCHOOL, DOWANHILL, GLASGOW

Children preparing miniature altar and vestments as for Benediction

way they have learned what they had to learn. All that follows is but a natural consequence. The phenomenon begins to grow as soon as it has manifested itself.

The children in whom it has shown itself are on the way towards psychical development ; gradually they will become " Great Workers," and finally it will be impossible for them ever to be idle. If, for instance, they have to wait for some one, they will not be long without finding something to do ; they will begin some work or other in order to be able to wait patiently. Work becomes then an *attitude* of the child.

As this development continues we see that the period of the *pseudo-fatigue* gradually decreases, while the line of rest becomes longer.

This rest *sui generis* is an active rest. Without doubt it is also an inner activity which has no connection with any object.

Let us go back to our comparison with the diner. There is a period for digestion which also belongs to the process of nutrition, but which takes place internally and is in nowise connected with the different dishes. The child's mental digestion also has particular traits of activity which are those of a meditating person ; this activity is very like that of persons in contemplation. The child also contemplates his environment, notices the smallest trifle and appears to be making discoveries.

Concentration is thus divisible into three phases : the preparatory phase; that of the " Great Work " which is connected with an exterior object; and the third phase which is entirely an inward one, full of

joy and light which, like a reflector, illuminates the environment and enlightens objects which would otherwise pass unobserved.

Only in the spiritual life do we find similar phenomena. Thus it has been written : " Eyes have they but they see not, ears have they but they hear not." It is not the senses only which must open these. These senses have thus become more and more the instruments of the mind.

In the same way there is a kind of parallel in purely intellectual matters. Ill-bred people on leaving a room collide with others or with the furniture they did not see ; they make their mistake worse by profuse apologies, by which fact they prove their inferiority ; a quite common excuse is : " Sorry, but I didn't see. . . . " A blind man would do the same : he would tread on his neighbour's toes and stumble over the furniture, and might say with equal truth : " Sorry, but etc. . . . " We do not think, however, that the education of the blind consists in teaching them to make apologies, and it would seem to us almost the same if this were to suffice for the normal child.

Let us consider another phenomenon : the child becomes obedient ; we are much astonished at this, for we have not taught him obedience ; moreover no one could ever imagine such marvellous patience as we now notice in the children.

Imagine a person who could not keep his balance, who could not stand upright, not daring to use his arms for fear of falling, but only stumbling forward. But once having learned how to maintain his equilibrium, he will be able to leap, to walk as he likes,

to bend to the right and left. It is thus in psychic life. Imagine an unbalanced mentality, to whom it is impossible to fix upon, and hold fast, a mental attitude dictated by the will. Could such a man submit to another's will infallibly ? How could he obey another's will without being able to obey his own ? Obedience is a kind of pliability of the mind, which is supported by the mental equilibrium. This obedience, which springs from strength of will, has in itself the greatest possibilities for what we call "*adaptability to environment.*" To adapt oneself to an environment, biologists teach us, one has to be strong. The monks also know this. To be obedient one has to be strong and well-balanced. These are acknowledged facts in religious life, but nobody had thought of employing similar phenomena in the intellectual world. Just as in biology the strong creature is able to adapt itself to circumstances, so will the vigorous intellect be obedient.

This is more or less the same phenomenon. If great wealth allows us to do all we wish to do, great strength will allow us to do all we are told to do.

By these gentle and patient means of development according to natural laws, by concentration and attention, by contemplation, which one might say is the digestion of the concentration, the individual fortifies himself, and once strong, he can finally do more than we would venture to ask of him.

Do you see now what the little child has done with his fundamental activity, his concentration of attention and his contemplation which is the starting point of all else ? Now he is master of his body, his muscles and his voluntary movements ; he is able to

follow them and direct them with attention. We have seen how far the child can master his movements, since he is able to keep motionless in the deepest silence (*cf.* the Silence Game); his self-command is often greater than that of grown-up persons. Neither must we forget the mechanism of this development, nor the control of mistakes, together with the influence exercised by environment.

If we consider all these facts together we shall find a striking resemblance to the religious life. A prepared environment, a life of peace, the required concentration for meditation and contemplation, mastery over the body, silence, the same exercises repeated from day to day. The monks have produced the greatest heroes, namely the saints, those who were ready for every strife, struggles against temptation, endurance, martyrdom. Such heroes are not formed by heated speeches, nor by sounding the trumpet of war; on the contrary they have traversed the noiseless road of formation.

If what is wanting could be supplied by exhortations, by threats or by commands, we should try this treatment to give back sight to the blind. This would be a miracle which is beyond our power. All the same, pedagogists still suffer from such delusions. What is essential are the bracing exercises. What do the monks do? They remain in that prepared environment day after day; now these same principles can be applied to the entire psychic life for the training of character.

If man be a unity, his path must be equally so. In the inner life there is also unity.

This is only a comparison of course, and no one will suppose that I should think of educating children of three with the same discipline as the monks, those saintly heroes. No, I have gained my experience in quite another way. Children in freedom have revealed to me the laws of inner life—general laws, which are not exclusively followed by monks. It is the children who led me to discover the narrow way for the development of that life which has freed itself from materialism. Children have spontaneously sought and have instinctively found the way of strength. Concentration is the centre of development. As a matter of fact every force must be conducted into channels before becoming motive power. The water of a flood is evaporated by the sun, but canalized water is heated and becomes motive power. This is the reason why we venture to say that it is useless to teach the principles of strength ; our aim must be to make strong men.

THE MONTESSORI METHOD

ALTHOUGH the primary object of this book is to set forth Dr. Montessori's ideas on the religious education of children, it will not be out of place to devote a chapter to the principles of the Montessori method taken as a whole. For it will be seen that her method of work in the religious sphere is simply an extension of the same principles to the study of the Supernatural Order.

It is not possible in a single chapter to give an adequate idea of the principles which underlie the Montessori method : we can but briefly point out some of the salient characteristics and refer those who wish to go further to Dr. Montessori's own works; and, what is equally important, urge them to go and see the method actually at work in a well-managed Montessori school.

If it were necessary to compress the description of the principles of the Montessori method into a single phrase, perhaps the most comprehensive would be that it was a method based on " Liberty in a Prepared Environment."

The Prepared Environment

Modern biological research has emphasized the importance of environment in the development, and therefore in the study, of all forms of life. This

does not imply that environment is the *cause* of the growth ; it is rather the means towards it. The wonderful successes in biological research achieved by such men as Darwin, De Vries, Fr. Wasman, Fabre and others have depended on the fact that these naturalists have been careful to place the developing forms they wished to study, and have studied as they grew up, in their proper environment. As Dr. Montessori says, " the function of the environment is not to *mould* the growing form of life, but to *reveal* it." Every schoolboy knows that to rear caterpillars successfully you must give them air and light and a particular kind of food ; otherwise their development will be arrested and they may die.

And the important point to notice is that unless the right environment is given to an organism it cannot reach full development or reveal its true nature. To take rather a crude example. Suppose (by an effort of imagination) that you had never seen or heard of such a creature as a monkey, and that one day you were given a present of a monkey, shut up in a small box with smooth walls and a glass side so that you could observe it. Under such conditions you would never come to realize the monkey's extraordinary propensity for climbing. But now, supposing someone came along—who had observed monkeys in their natural environment—and said to you: "Place that creature in a large cage with a tree inside it and you will see it display an agility that will put the cleverest acrobats to shame." You could verify the statement by preparing an environment and putting the monkey into it. The true

environment would not be the *cause* of the monkey's agility; it would only *reveal* it.

In the same way, says Dr. Montessori, if you wish to understand the nature of the growing child—to discover the capabilities and talents within him—you *can never properly do so until you place him in an environment suitable to his needs, and allow him to be free in it.*

The higher and more complex the organism, the greater the number of factors in the environment which are necessary to draw out the latent faculties of the living creature. Thus for the growth of a plant you require suitable soil, fresh air, light, moisture, and suitable temperature; and for an animal you need, not only all these, but, in addition, space and liberty for it to move about freely. But man is an intellectual being, and therefore in the environment of the growing child, you will need not only those factors in the environment which support the vegetative functions, and also the opportunity to move about like an animal, but in addition something which answers to the need of his growing intellectual faculties as well. Now a Montessori school is just such a "prepared environment."

It would not be sufficient to leave a child all day to his own devices in the middle of a field, or in an ordinary living room. True, he would have fresh air and liberty to move about. But this would be no more true freedom for him than it would be for a bird shut up in a cage. For the child—by his very nature—longs to spread out the pinions of his intellect and rise to the use of reason. He would

Photo by Taylor's Studio.

MONTESSORI ROOM, CONVENT OF MERCY, OAK LEA, SUNDERLAND

Notice piano at far end, and lines on the floor for children to march on. The child in foreground on left is using part of the music apparatus

therefore soon become restless and unsatisfied without opportunity and means to develop these rational faculties.

But now place that same child in an environment which has been carefully prepared so that it will correspond not only to his vegetative and animal needs, *but also to his intellectual and moral needs*, and leave him free in it, and you will see a wonder that beggars description. You will then see—as I have often seen—in different countries—some forty to fifty children, of ages varying from three to seven years, all in the same room and all quite at liberty to move about and talk as they wish. And yet in spite—or rather—*because* of this liberty (taken in conjunction with the prepared environment) there is no more disorder or confusion than you will find in a large bank or emporium, where everyone is quietly going about his own business. In fact the children are all so busy with their various occupations that I have often seen the teacher go out of the room without the children even appearing to notice it.

The orderly, yet spontaneous behaviour of small children, their astonishing concentration—often for prolonged periods of time, their manifest joy and serenity in their work, their mutual helpfulness and courtesy, the avidity with which they throw themselves by their own choice into such occupations as arithmetic and grammar—all this seems almost incredible to persons who have never seen it for themselves. Yet it all comes from placing the child in an environment specially prepared for his mental needs. If this is done he shows a mental agility comparable to the physical agility of the monkey

taken out of the small box and placed in an arboreal environment.

A very important part of this prepared environment consists in what is (rather clumsily) called the Didactic Apparatus.[1] This is not the place to enter into a description of this Montessori material. Suffice it to say that in the earlier stages the material is used to bring about a concentration of the child's attention on sensorial objects, thereby developing and refining his sense perceptions ; and later, to lead through combined operation of the senses and intellect, to a knowledge of reading, writing and arithmetic.

At the same time as he is thus employed the child, by finding himself a free member in a community of children of varying ages, has the means of learning day by day, and week by week, those lessons in self-effacement and courtesy which make social life possible.

It must not be forgotten that another and the most important factor in the child's environment is the teacher or directress. For though the rôle played by the directress is not the same as that of an ordinary infant-school teacher, it is no less important. It is indeed even more important and requires more tact and discrimination ; for without this sympathetic guidance of the directress all the rest of the environment would be almost useless.

It must be remembered too—in connexion with this question of the environment—that what is left out of the child's environment is as important, in its way, as what is put in. Things which are not

[1]Dr. Montessori prefers the phrase "Material for Development."

essential, which have no purpose in assisting the development, are to be excluded.

"Montessori Freedom" in Education

Dr. Montessori has remarked that there are two kinds of objectors to her method. First, there are those who, hearing that liberty for the child is an essential part of it, are at once frightened off. These are generally people who have never really studied the method and jump to the conclusion that it is based upon the Naturalistic Theory of Rousseau as to man's nature, in accordance with the prevalent New Pelagianism.

The other objectors are found amongst those who have made a more intimate acquaintance with her work. Curiously enough *they* complain on just the opposite score—viz., that Dr. Montessori does not allow the child *enough liberty!* How can this paradox be explained? The answer lies in a juster appreciation of the true meaning of liberty.

Let us try and make this clear by an example, of a kind which frequently occurs in a Montessori school. Amongst the "didactic apparatus" there is a set known as the Number Rods. This consists of ten rods of varying lengths, the smallest being ten centimetres long, and the longest a metre. The intermediary ones form an ascending series varying by ten centimetres. The purpose of these rods is to acquaint the small child with the idea of number—and in particular the numbers one to ten. To this end the child is taught to use the rods in a particular way. By so doing the rods assist him to gain a clear notion of number; and even

start him doing simple sums in addition and subtraction. "Now," says Dr. Montessori, "if you find the child is no longer using the rods for the purpose for which they were intended, if for instance he begins building a tunnel with them, or using one of them to ride a-cock-horse on, then the apparatus must be taken from him." Dr. Montessori has no objection whatever to a child building a house or tunnel, *but not with those particular rods*, because they are of a special nature, and destined for a special purpose, and so made that, used rightly, they will bring about a certain intellectual development. The same principle applies to the use of the other pieces of apparatus. *The child must respect the end for which they are made.* This refusal to allow the children to play with the apparatus in any way they like seems to some people an unwarrantable interference with the liberty of the child.

But this is—most emphatically—not Dr. Montessori's idea of liberty. She is very strict with her teachers in insisting that *no child may be allowed to use any of the apparatus until he has been definitely taught the use of it*, and the child may only occupy itself with it as long as he respects that use.

On the other hand she insists that the child should have the liberty to choose—from those pieces of apparatus of which he understands the use—this or that particular one he wants to work at (providing no other child is using it). But he may only choose from amongst those which he has learnt how to use. No words could better express Dr. Montessori's idea of liberty in her school than those used by the Holy Father Leo XIII in his Encyclical "Libertas

praestantissimum." He says :—" Considered in its nature it (liberty) is the faculty of choosing means fitted for the end proposed ; for he is master of his actions who can choose one thing out of many. . . .

" Now since everything chosen as a means is viewed as good or useful, and since Good as such is the proper object of our desire, it follows that freedom of choice is a property of the will. . . .

" But the will cannot proceed to act until it is enlightened by the knowledge possessed by the intellect—and this is the more so because in all voluntary acts choice is subject to a judgment upon the truth of the good presented, declaring to which good preference be given. . . .

" No sensible man can doubt that judgment is an act of reason not of will. . . .

" The end, or object, both of the rational will and of its liberty is that good only which is in conformity with reason. Since, however, both these faculties are imperfect, it is possible, as is often seen, that the reason should propose something which is really not good, but which has the appearance of good, and that the will should choose accordingly. . . . "

Again in another passage the same Holy Father says that since the intellect of man is weak, " it is necessary that it should have light and strength given it to direct its actions to good and restrain it from evil, and without this, freedom would be its ruin." And again, " First of all there must be *law : that is a fixed rule of teaching what is to be done, and what is to be left undone* " (the italics are ours). Again, " Nothing more foolish can be uttered or conceived than the notion that because

man is free by nature he is therefore exempt from law. . . . "

Many of Dr. Montessori's own followers have grievously misunderstood her on this point, and done much harm to the movement by confusing liberty with licence. She herself is absolutely clear on the issue. " We must always consider choice in relation to things we have already presented to the child." " A child might come into the room and 'choose' for example the numerical rods out of *curiosity :* that is not free choice. Choice is what he takes from a variety of things, but only from those he knows." " Some people think," says Dr. Montessori, " that true liberty of thought consists in thinking and believing what you like, not what is true—forgetting the word of Our Lord Who said 'it is the Truth which shall make you free.' "

Again and again she insists that the Freedom given to the child must be *a freedom to do right*—not what is wrong. That the possibility of doing wrong is not an essential part of freedom is evident from the fact that the Angels and Saints in Heaven are perfectly free. " Never fear to destroy evil," says Dr. Montessori, " it is only the good that you must preserve." But she is careful to add that, sometimes, actions in the child which have really a good motive and serve a useful purpose are not understood by the teacher or parent, and are suppressed to the child's detriment. It is only the experienced eye that can distinguish the weed from the useful plant in their very young stages ; and similarly it often needs an experienced and sympathetic observer to distinguish between those

actions on a child's part which are the outcome of an orderly impulse, and those which spring from a disorderly one. Too often, for instance, in the past, good behaviour in the schoolroom has been made synonymous with the immobility of the child.

Numberless comments have been made by visitors on the decorous behaviour of the little children in Montessori schools—their graceful precision of movement as they walk in and out amongst the little tables and chairs, their careful treatment of the apparatus, their courteous behaviour to each other and to visitors. They seem to combine the purposefulness of adults with the naïve, spontaneous charm of childhood. All this is the result of a liberty which has come after knowledge. Nothing is left to chance. There is a right way and a wrong way of doing everything, even such a small matter as moving a chair, handing a pencil to another person, or folding a rug. From the very beginning—in the Exercises on Practical Life—the tiny children are given what are called lessons in grace and courtesy. Again, one of the fundamental principles of the method is that the apparatus is devised in such a way that it corrects mistakes automatically. Thus Dr. Montessori insists that the little tables and chairs should be light and portable so that they can be easily knocked out of place. This being so, the children soon learn to correct any clumsy or awkward movements in their efforts to avoid these minor accidents.

The Superior of the Vincent de Paul Society in Spain very happily summed up the whole matter of Montessori Liberty when he said: "Do not fear a

Method of Liberty which counts the words in the teacher's mouth and makes the children walk along a line on the floor."

The Right Environment Reveals the "New Child"

We have said that, according to Dr. Montessori, the function of the environment is not so much to mould as to reveal the growing child. It must not be forgotten that, to this end, it is not enough to have the right environment, but you must give the child liberty in it. To make this clear let us revert once more to the simile of the captured monkey. Suppose you put the monkey into a spacious home, furnished with trees to climb in, but at the same time kept it chained tightly to the foot of a tree ; you would not even then realize its acrobatic possibilities. It is the same with the child. If you place him amidst a prepared environment—*i.e.*, prepared to answer to his intellectual needs—it would all be to no purpose unless you allowed him to be free to move about in it, and to use it as he likes.

But—given this freedom in the prepared environment—the most astonishing results appear; and the child reveals itself as possessing characteristics and virtues not usually credited to it.

It must be borne in mind that in singing the praises of the "New Child," so revealed, Dr. Montessori is referring to what theologians would call "natural" virtues as opposed to "supernatural." The question of the relationship of the unsuspected natural virtues of the "New Child"

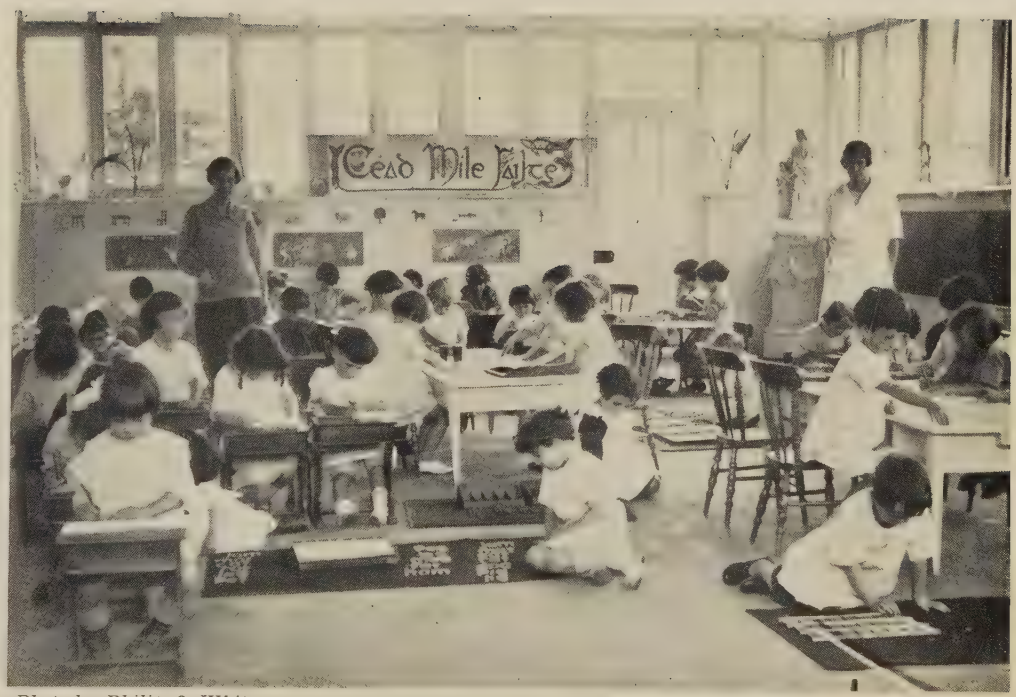


Photo by Philip & Whitney.

ST. OTERAN'S, CONVENT OF MERCY, WATERFORD

A corner of the "Babies' Room" which contains over a hundred infants. St. Oteran's is a large National School and was the first to introduce the Montessori Method into Ireland. "Cead Mile Failte" is Celtic for "A Hundred Thousand Welcomes"

to the Doctrine of Original Sin we shall discuss on a later page (see Appendix, p. 158).

Meanwhile we shall consider some of the characteristics of the Child as revealed by the combination of Liberty with a prepared Environment.

Auto-Education

Dr. Montessori insists on the principle that the only real education is Auto-Education. The child's mind is not a sack to be filled with information ; it is a dynamic principle. As food is useless to the body—indeed injurious—unless it be thoroughly assimilated and made one with the whole organism as a living part in a living whole, so mere knowledge is useless, unless it is thoroughly assimilated and made one with the child's mind as living part of a living unity. Thus assimilation of knowledge is best effected as the result of the spontaneous working of the intellect. That is why the facts we cram up for an examination generally disappear from our minds as soon as the examination is over. They are not organically related to the rest of our knowledge. "A truth discovered and conquered by one's own efforts exercises a much more compelling power than the same truth learnt from another, . . . Acquisitions so made are stable, because, each having come in its own time, does not interfere or become confused with others—each rather preserving its unity in clear contrast to the others."[1]

"You cannot educate directly," says Dr. Montessori, "any more than you can make silk directly."

[1] *Psychologie et Psychothérapie Educatives* par Abbé d'Agnel et Dr. Espiney—an excellent book which ought to be translated into English.

In the latter case all you can do is to place the silkworm in its right environment, give it the right kind of food and *leave it to its own spontaneous activity;* in time it will spin its silken cocoon. So with the child. You can give it the right environment and the right intellectual food—but the active work of education must be the spontaneous exercise of the child's own faculties. One of the most striking and charming features of a Montessori school are the Montessori "explosions" which are constantly occurring in the child's development. These are moments when the child's intellect, working spontaneously, suddenly makes a new generalization or sees some unexpected relationship. At such times the child visibly experiences the thrill of joy which always accompanies such expansions of the intellect.

Immense Spontaneous Activity of the Child

Most people do not realize the immense spontaneous activity of the intellect in the growing child. Many persons think children are as a rule naturally indolent and have to be urged on continuously to mental work. This is a profound fallacy, and usually results from the fact that grown-ups imagine the child's intellect to be torpid because it is not working in the way they expect or wish it to work. Some of the most interesting of Dr. Montessori's lectures to her students deal with the spontaneous work of the intellect in children of two years *and under.* The work of the intellect is going on incessantly even before the child can speak, striving without pause to reduce the chaos of its impressions to order and arrangement. "To the new-born baby," says

Professor James, "the world is one big, booming, buzzing confusion," and the marvel of infancy is that the child is able to sort things out as quickly and as well as he does. In the growth of the "microcosm" (*i.e.*, the individual) there takes place something analogous to the operations described in Genesis in the Creation of the World. First, there were made the broad divisions—light separated from darkness, land from water, and so on. So in the child's mind one may have these rough, primary classifications. For instance, a small child may not yet have learnt to distinguish the different colours, or the different numbers, or the different notes from each other. Yet he has already made the broad classification between number, colour, and sound. He may say "one, two, three, twelve, seven"; he may confuse blue with green, but he will not say, "one, two, three, blue, *eight*." This means that his opening intellect is already creating certain broad differences, as between colour and number. And later on—as in the creation of the world—his spirit, made in the likeness of the Creator, will go on to a more detailed differentiation. Seen properly these facts have immense significance as being evidences of a great spontaneous activity of the intellect; for it is the intellect which compares, contrasts, arranges in categories, and distinguishes individuals and universals.

In the same way Dr. Montessori has pointed out, and every observant mother will agree with her, that very small children—at the ages of two, three and four—display a most extraordinary passion for having things in their right places. You will often

observe, in a roomful of people, that it is the smallest person present—of two or three years of age—who is most upset if a door is left open, or the corner of a rug turned over, or a cloak or hat left lying on a chair. At this age the small child feels a passionate desire that things in the environment should maintain a certain repose, and this longing to set the objects in its little world in their right place reflects the growing sense of order which is developing in the child's mind. In the Montessori school the small child has the fullest scope for giving vent to this very useful activity. Curiously enough this passion for having everything "just so" in the environment is much more strikingly evident in a child of three than in one of six or nine years of age.

This introduces us to another very important principle in the Montessori method.

Periods of Special Sensibility

"When I was a child," says the apostle, "I thought as a child, but when I became a man I thought as a man, and put away childish things." Dr. Montessori goes much further than this: she would say "When I was a child of two I thought as a child of two, but when I became a child of six I thought as a child of six and put away those things I had thought as a child of two," and so on.

In other words the life of the child is a series of different stages, each having its peculiar mental and physical characteristics.

At each stage the mind of the child tends to be peculiarly active in a particular way; and, as a consequence, has a special urge to occupy itself with

certain factors or aspects in its environment at each particular stage.

Age of Sensation

Between the years of three to six the child is at a stage when the activities of the senses predominate. It is hard for us adults, who possess a vast store of abstract ideas and conceptions and the garnered memories of more years than some of us care to think of, to imagine what the life of the senses means to a little child. We have, *by the very nature of our intellectual processes*, become, most of us, much more independent of our physical environment than the child of three. At any rate we can, for long periods, detach ourselves largely from things sensible, as we follow a line of abstract reasoning. But the child has only a very slender stock of abstract ideas ; and it is for this very reason that he is so interested in the objects of the physical world around him. For it is only by the work of his senses, combined with the work of his intellect (*Intellectus agens* and *Intellectus patiens*) that he is able to build up a storehouse of abstract notions and concepts, according to the Aristotelian maxim, *Nihil est in Intellectu quod prius non fuerit in sensu.*

Through the windows of the senses innumerable sense impressions are pouring into his soul, and it is the business of the intellect to cope with these multitudinous and heterogeneous impressions, and reduce them, by classification and comparison, to some sort of an orderly system. The material world around him, so varied, so bewildering, so manifold, so alluring is a South Sea of discovery for

the small child. His little life is a perpetual and wondering exploration. His constant mental attitude is like that of Miranda in the *Tempest* (though his admiration is concentrated possibly more on things than on people) :

> " O wonder !
> How many goodly creatures are there here!
> How beauteous mankind is ! O brave new World
> That has such people in it ! "[1]

Now the Montessori apparatus is so designed as to assist the classifying work of the intellect by presenting to it colours, shapes, surfaces, and all manner of objects, in such a manner (by careful grading or striking contrast and so forth) that the child's

[1] The Sense of Wonder

" A great deal of man's happiness comes from the power of admiration. To admire something is like a stream of fresh water flowing over the soul's surface ; children are so happy because for them there is so much to wonder at. The deep solemnity of their untarnished eyes is the solemnity of wonderment. Woe to the man who has nothing to wonder at ! his soul has lost all freshness, and his eyes are lustreless and vacant.

" If at any time of our lives we cease to wonder, the fault must be all ours. The world in which God has placed man is an eternal wonder ; admiration is the only thing which establishes a kind of equality and proportion between man and the vast world in which man lives. We do not understand the marvels of the universe. We see very little of the universe ; we live, each one of us, in a very small corner of it ; the universe is not ours, but it becomes ours through admiration. . . .

" It is the saddest thing in the world to have one's lot cast with people who have lost the gift of admiration. It is the cruellest and darkest captivity of heart ; it is external and internal darkness. It is the hardest purgatory of the soul ; it would be hell itself but for the hope that the day will come that will set us free from the companionship of unwondering souls, and place us amongst the spirits whose life is unending admiration.

" Let me be surrounded with the young and the infants, whose every sound is the expression of some wonderment, and I shall feel that my heart swells again with a happiness it has not known since childhood."—*The Personality of Christ*, by Dom Ascar Vonier, Abbot of Buckfast.

mind is drawn on to abstract from them *clear* and *definite* ideas.

Indeed, one might almost say that the object of the Montessori sensory apparatus is a super-sensible one. Hundreds of observers have commented on the almost uncanny concentration of children of two and three years, on the sensory apparatus. Let us take for example the apparatus called "the cylinders." This consists of ten cylindrical pieces of wood, each with a little nob on top for a handle. These cylinders vary by half a centimetre in diameter, from the first, which is half a centimetre in diameter, to the last which is five centimetres; and each fits into a socket exactly corresponding to its particular size. All the child has to do is to take the cylinders out, mix them up, and replace them in their right sockets. At first the child seems to have no idea of the right size, and begins by putting the cylinders in the wrong sockets ; but the apparatus automatically corrects the child's errors. Children of two and three years of age will repeat this exercise twenty and thirty times consecutively, and use it sometimes for days together, gradually learning to do it more quickly and more accurately.

A casual observer might think the child's enjoyment consists in the delight of simply putting them in and out again ; but the source of its joy is deeper than that. Every time the exercise is performed the child is obliged to make a series of comparisons—comparing the sizes of all the cylinders. At first it means the most ridiculous mistakes ; but in the end it learns to pick them out in their right order without a mistake. The real joy of the child lies

in the psychological fact (not of course consciously realized by the child itself) that in repeating the exercise it is acquiring an ever increasing sensibility. It is acquiring the power to discern at a glance the different grades of cylinders. It is this inner growth, this development of an increasing sensitiveness, of a new power, that is the really important element in this apparently simple and meaningless exercise ; and it is this that makes it so fascinating to the child.

So is it with all the rest of the Montessori apparatus. It is not the preoccupation with the material in itself which is of special value, it is the inner growth which accompanies it.

This brings us to another of the important principles of the Montessori method—one which stands in close relationship to that of liberty.

The Value of Spontaneous Repetition in Infant Education

Most persons have observed the tendency in small children to repeat a saying, or an action, or game over and over again. We believe that Dr. Montessori is the first who has clearly recognized the significance of this trait. It is often assumed that when a teacher has explained a thing to the child that is the end of the business, but Dr. Montessori says : " To have learnt something is, for a child, only a point of departure." What is necessary after that is a period of digestion or maturation, a period of intense and prolonged mental activity. A child on being shown how to use a piece of Montessori apparatus—whether it be the colour tablets, or the

Photograph by Poole.

URSULINE CONVENT, WATERFORD. Montessori Class in open air.

letters of the alphabet, or the multiplication board etc.—is not content to use it only once. It feels the need for more; and an inner impulse urges it to settle down, day after day, to a process of repetition which often seems incomprehensible to adults. *We* should get terribly bored if *we* had to repeat these exercises over and over again as the child does spontaneously and with such obvious delight. Indeed, in training her teachers, Dr. Montessori makes her students settle down at a piece of apparatus, and repeat it over and over again for a quarter or half an hour—as the child does—until the students are thoroughly sick of it. Then she says, "Now by your very boredom you will be able to gauge something of that imperious inner impulse which drives the child to this prolonged repetition. It is the very urge of life itself, the tremendous impulse of the developing intellectual faculty which drives it on and sustains it through these—to you—tedious labours."

There is a passage in G. K. Chesterton's *Orthodoxy* which I cannot forbear quoting, as it illumines this point with his characteristic vigour. "All the towering materialism which dominates the modern mind rests ultimately on one assumption—a false assumption. It is supposed that if a thing goes on repeating itself it is probably dead. People feel that if the universe was personal it would vary, if the sun were alive it would dance. The sun rises every morning : I do not rise every morning ; but the variation is due not to my activity but to my inaction. The thing I mean can be seen for instance in children when they find some game or

joke they specially enjoy. A child kicks its legs rhythmically through excess not absence of life. Because children have abounding vitality—therefore they want things repeated and unchanged. They always say 'Do it again' and the grown-up person does it again until he is nearly dead."

"What interests the child," says Dr. Montessori, "in these repetitions is not only the sensation of doing the exercise, whatever it may be, but also the fact *that he is acquiring a new power of perception, enabling him to see what he did not at first notice.*"

It will be seen from this how necessary is the principle of liberty, for the child must be allowed the freedom to go on repeating the exercises as long as he likes; otherwise this inner ripening of the faculties has not time to take place.

Each Stage a Preparation for the Next

The preparations of life are often indirect. This is frequently the case in the sphere of education. To make this clear let us take an illustration. The caterpillar is destined to become a butterfly which flits about from flower to flower, living on honey; but it would be no good, while it is at the caterpillar stage, expecting it to fly, or offering it honey as a means of sustenance. If you are anxious for a caterpillar to develop into a successful butterfly, you can best *help it by giving it what it needs as a caterpillar.* Froebel, the inventor of the Kindergarten, saw this truth very clearly, but he was not so successful as Dr. Montessori in providing the right kind of nourishment for the child at the different stages. He says, "The child, the

boy, the man, should know no other endeavour but to be at every stage of development wholly what this stage calls for. Then will each successive stage spring like a new shoot from a healthy bud . . . for only the adequate development of man at each preceding stage can effect and bring about adequate development at each succeeding stage."[1]

The child when it first comes to a Montessori school, at the age of three or four, applies itself for the most part to the purely sensory apparatus—colour tablets, cylinders, long stair, etc. It would be no good giving such a child the advanced apparatus, for it is still at the stage when sensations predominate. The great thing is to utilize each stage as it comes. Every one must have noticed how little children are always touching objects—running their fingers, for instance, along the edges and surfaces of chairs, tables, plates, in fact, of all the objects they come across. How often one hears a grown-up say to them "Don't touch those things," "Keep your hands off," and yet the child persists in these forbidden activities in spite of threats and punishments, as if impelled to them by some uncontrollable internal impulse. Instead of repressing these tactile explorations so natural to the child at this stage Dr. Montessori encourages them, and has harnessed them to educational ends, as, for instance, in learning to write. The child learns the shape of the letters of the alphabet by means of letters, cut out in sandpaper and pasted on cardboard ; and it does so by feeling over the sandpaper letters with its first and second fingers, lightly touching the surface of the

[1] *Education of Man* : Froebel.

sandpaper. It does this many scores of times and soon acquires a muscular memory of the letters.

Dropped Stitches in the Mental Life

But it would be useless to give the sandpaper letters to a child of eleven or twelve, because he has passed the stage when he is so feverishly interested in tactile impressions. Hence the importance of making full use of each stage as it comes, for there are certain ideas and activities which, if they are not acquired at a certain particular stage, can never be learned quite so well, or in such an easy manner. Indeed one might say of these " sensitive periods " (adapting Shakespeare somewhat) " There is a tide in the affairs of the child which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune, omitted, all the voyage of his life will be spent," if not in " shallows and miseries," at least, in a poverty of development compared with what might have been. There are many grown-ups who will remain to the end of their lives gauche and awkward in their movements, or lacking appreciation in the finer shades of colour, or untidy in their person simply because, at the critical stage when a natural interest in these things was to the fore, there was no environment or person in it to secure that the " sensitive period " was made full use of. Thus there are, what Dr. Montessori calls " dropped stitches " in the structure of the mental life which can never be wholly picked up. It is true that even in spite of the dropped stitches a garment may be completed, and it is true that the child will in any case grow up somehow, but the final result will not be so perfect.

Training of the Imagination

The objection is sometimes raised against the Montessori method that it lays an over-emphasis on the training of the senses to the detriment of the development of the imagination. There is not enough make-believe, it is said, in the Montessori school, and the child's imagination is starved. If this were true it would be a serious charge; but it is not true.

There is no outstanding educationalist who appreciates better the value of imagination than Dr. Montessori, nor has displayed in his writings and conversation a more vivid and telling imagination than Dr. Montessori.

She would be indeed one of the last persons to wish to limit the development of imagination. She devotes over a hundred pages of one of her books to this faculty—its development, its function in art and science, its use and its misuse.

Her own reply to her objectors on this score takes something of the following form. Far from agreeing that the child's preoccupation with sensorial objects is likely to thwart its imaginative development, she asserts that it will *materially assist it.*

Discussing the creative work of the imagination she says : " What is called creation is in reality a composition, a construction raised upon a primitive material of the mind, which must be collected from the environment by means of the senses. This is the general principle summed up in the ancient maxim : '*Nihil est intellectu quod prius non fuerit in sensu.*' 'We are unable to "imagine" things

which do not actually present themselves to our senses.'"

Or again : "The sensory education which prepares for the accurate perception of all the differential details in the qualities of things is, therefore, the foundation of the observation of things and of phenomena which present themselves to our senses, and with this, it helps us to collect from the external world the material for the imagination.

"Imaginative creation has no mere vague sensory support : that is to say, it is not the unbridled divagation of the fancy among images of light, colour, sounds and impressions, but it is a creation firmly allied to reality ; and the more it holds fast to the forms of the external created world the loftier will be the value of its internal creation.

"So it may be said that in order to develop the imagination it is necessary for everyone first of all to put himself in contact with *reality*."

True and False Use of the Imagination Especially in Religion

If the imagination be not based on a solid foundation of reality it may become a danger. And here we might put in a word about fairy tales. Contrary to what is generally supposed Dr. Montessori has no objections to fairy tales in themselves, so long as the child is old enough to distinguish between what is real in them and what is not. If the child is too young to realize this distinction it may grow up in a world of unrealities which it may find it hard to outgrow. Indeed it may not even grow up, as in the case of the little girl who went to see *Peter Pan*

and afterwards, in her childish simplicity, jumped from her bedroom window, expecting to fly away like Peter and Wendy, and was killed.

Imagination and Religion

Still worse is the case of those who have confused imagination with reality to such an extent that it becomes an obstruction to their religious development. I was present once at a Theosophical school, when a visitor gave a serious "talk" to the children on Fairies and Elementals; she actually passed round, *as genuine reproductions*, some photographs of "real" fairies flitting about in a garden in Yorkshire. Those who are acquainted with the extravagant imaginations of Theosophical writers know only too well how dangerous such seductive phantasies may be to the immaturely developed minds of children, and how hard it is for those who have been brought up in this world of false imaginations to break through them to a solid bed-rock of reality. As Dr. Montessori well says—"The way of Truth is difficult through the crust of imagination which is fixed without being first constructed upon a basis of truth."

As so often happens in education, we must educate the imagination indirectly by giving the child the opportunity of storing up a supply of true images. We must not treat the imagination as an isolated and special faculty to be developed separately by itself. Rather we must have faith in the spontaneous working of the child's mind according to its own laws. Our business is to present the external world to the child in a manner that helps

him to understand it, to help him to organize an inner life corresponding to it. The flight of the imagination will come at the right time, even as the caterpillar will acquire wings and fly if you give it time and the proper nourishment. The nourishment of the caterpillar may seem heavy, coarse material for a creature destined to flight—but it is nevertheless the best preparation for it. So the preoccupation with tangible objects, their forms, colours, sizes, etc., may not seem a very imaginative occupation, but it is nevertheless a necessary preparation for true imaginative flight.

Spontaneous Ascent from Concrete to Abstract

Similar to the objection we have been considering is the criticism that the child's pre-occupation with the Montessori material is a hindrance to the development of purely abstract and intellectual activities. To learn multiplication by the multiplication board, or work out long division with the "division apparatus," is not all this keeping the child back in the concrete and particular, when it should be soaring up to the region of universals? Observation of children in Montessori schools has again and again shown this to be a vain objection. Experience shows that the children, *of their own accord*, when the time comes, discard the apparatus and work without it. I remember in one school watching a little girl doing subtraction sums with the "number frame," beside her on the table. I noticed with interest, however, that she did not use the bead frame at all but did the sums in her head. "Why do you not use the frame?" I asked,

Boy playing a tune of his own composition on the bells.

Child busy with the "Thousand Bead Chain." The cards are "hundreds" placed like stations along the line.

" Because I can do it quicker now without it," was her sensible reply.

A concrete basis (such as is supplied by the didactic material) is necessary so that the child can abstract from it clear and definite " concepts." When this has been done the child abandons the concrete and particular for the universal. " This process," says Dr. Montessori (*in a simile which is in itself a perfect example of the right use of imagination*), " this process has led us to liken the child's mind to an aeroplane which requires the ground to rest on for a short distance, but only that it may arise and fly. These ascensions, due to work accomplished with such attention and constancy, remind us of the joy felt by the souls in Dante's *Purgatory*, while they are undergoing the suffering necessary for their purification and for their ascent into Heaven ; and the teacher, a silent and gentle director, but at the same time strong and sure in pointing out the path which leads to perfection, is like the angel who guards, helps and comforts. These spontaneous ascents of the mind are accompanied by the most intense joy, and give rise to what we have above referred to as the ' Montessori Explosions.' "

Concentration and Character Building

It cannot be too often pointed out as a fundamental and far-reaching principle, that the *child is constantly acquiring qualities which have no direct relation to the material means of development which are offered to him.*

One of the most astonishing features of a Montessori school is the intense and prolonged

concentration which the children display when they are working with the apparatus.

This concentration is of great practical value educationally, as it results in the children learning to read and write and do elementary arithmetic more quickly and more easily than in an ordinary school.

Still more important, however, is the effect of this prolonged concentration in the sphere of the child's moral character and growth.

When a child comes to a Montessori school first he is often restless and distracted. He will try now this piece of apparatus, now that—" everything by starts and nothing long." At this stage he may go from table to table, sometimes even interfering with the other children who are working; in short, he behaves as a " naughty " boy. Then one day, sooner or later according to individual circumstances, he begins to show an intense interest in one of the exercises. It does not matter which : the important thing is not the external object but the internal action of the soul which accompanies this profound concentration. For, when once a child has shown this intense interest in any one of the exercises (it does not matter which), when it has settled down to it in such a manner that he is oblivious of everything that is going on around him—*then* something seems to happen inside his soul. He comes out from this experience a changed being.

It is the beginning of a new phase, almost a new life. A new polarization of his whole personality now takes place. It is as if the steady concentration of

all his faculties had acted as a magnet acts through a piece of paper on a heap of iron filings ; suddenly and mysteriously the confused mass of particles arrange themselves in a definite and orderly form. So is it with the elements of his personality : the child becomes, often with surprising suddenness, docile, good tempered, hard-working, and considerate to others. He goes on to show a like interest in other exercises, often the very ones he passed over before.

" It is after these manifestations that a true discipline is established, the most obvious results of which are closely related to what we call ' respect for the work of others and consideration for the rights of others.' "

So profound and lasting is the effect of this first prolonged concentration on the child's soul that Dr. Montessori compares it to the phenomenon of " conversion " in the supernatural world.

Of course, as in the case of a convert, this " conversion," important as it is in itself, is only the starting point of a new development—towards more complete self-mastery. " To ensure the continuance of this attitude and of the development of personality, it is essential that *some real task* should be performed each day, for it is from the completed cycle of an activity, from methodical concentration, that the child develops equilibrium, elasticity, adaptability and the resulting power to perform the higher actions, such as those which are termed acts of obedience."

" This is comparable," says Dr. Montessori in another place, " to the method of the Catholic

religion for the preservation of the forces of the spiritual life, viz., a period of 'spiritual concentration' which opens up the possibility of acquiring 'moral powers.' It is from methodical 'meditations' that the moral personality must draw its powers of solidification, without which the 'inner man,' incoherent and unbalanced, fails to possess itself and dispose of itself for noble ends."

Exercises in Practical Life

No outline of the Montessori method would be complete without a mention of what are called the Exercises in Practical Life. The Montessori school is, as we have said, a specially prepared environment which calls out the child's activities, and in so doing instructs and disciplines him. During a large part of his time he is occupied with the specially prepared apparatus—whether purely sensory, as in the first stages, or, later on, with that which leads him along the path of the "Three R's." Of no less importance, however, in the child's development (according to Dr. Montessori) are the exercises of practical life. In these, too, the child is brought into relationship with a prepared environment. The child is taught carefully how to wash his hands, to pour water from one vase to another without spilling any on the floor, to move about amongst fragile objects without breaking them, to touch things without spoiling them, to clean things and put them in order, to sweep, and dust the furniture of his little world, to arrange flowers, to set the table, to wash dishes and so on.

In this connexion, too, we should mention the

"Silence game," which combines a number of these activities, and in addition presents to the children the mysterious fascination of collective silence—an experience not usually attainable with such small children.

Of great value, too, in developing that poise and refinement of movement so noticeable in Montessori children are the rhythmical exercises, in which the children are taught to march and dance to music along a line on the floor.

The New Child

It will be seen from the foregoing pages that the Montessori method claims to be much more than a particular way of teaching this or that special subject, more than a general method of instruction.

More fundamental than this, its object is to influence the whole life of the child : it aims, in short, at a total development of the personality, a harmonious growth of all the potentialities of the child, physical and mental, according to the law of its being.

We have seen that to make possible this inner growth the child is placed in a special environment, so prepared as to meet its inner needs ; and that *in* this environment the child is given an unusual degree of liberty. Further, that as a result, the personality of the child is developed and strengthened in a remarkable way.

The supporters of the method claim, in fact, that the children, when placed in these circumstances, reveal themselves as possessing capabilities and powers not usually credited to them. "It has been

proved beyond a doubt, that under these circumstances many of the defects or limitations usually associated with children disappear as if by magic. These children display quite spontaneously a love of work, a respect for the work and property of others and for property in itself. They show themselves capable of prolonged concentration, of great delicacy and precision of movement, of mutual forbearance, of swift and willing obedience. Furthermore, it frequently happens that physical defects such as indigestion, stammering, nervousness of all sorts, are removed. In short there results such a toning up and heightening of the whole personality that again and again observers have found themselves using the expression that Dr. Montessori has revealed a '*New Child*.' "

It is of course absurd to imagine that Dr. Montessori's method—or any method could *make* a new child, since human nature always remains the same. But what she has done has been to show that, when treated in the right way, the child reveals itself as possessing higher capabilities, both intellectually and morally, than those with which it is usually credited.

A COMPARISON BETWEEN THE METHOD OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND THE MONTESSORI METHOD

IT is a curious but undeniable fact that amongst the leading advocates of the Montessori method in America, England, Holland, Austria, Sweden and Ireland, are to be found converts to Catholicism. It might be supposed that this circumstance was due to a proselytizing zeal on the part of Dr. Montessori. But this can hardly be the case because Dr. Montessori does not, as a rule, touch on the question of religion in her training courses for teachers. On these occasions she confines her lectures to the psychology and practice of her method in general—a procedure, both wise and politic, since her audiences usually consist of members of many different denominations, with no particular interest in religious education.

Yet we do not think that the existence of this group of persons, who are at the same time converts to the Montessori method *and* to Catholicism, is entirely a matter of chance. It is true the method has received express Papal Benediction, and we would be far from denying that this might have something to do with it. But taking into consideration only purely natural causes, the important factor

appears to us to lie in the fact that there is a *striking resemblance between the method of the Montessori school and the method of the Catholic Church, in the manner in which both institutions adapt themselves, in practice, to the psychological nature of man.* In this chapter we shall briefly point out some of these similarities and show how they arise from a common psychology.

(1) A PREPARED ENVIRONMENT

No institution understands better than the Catholic Church the importance of a "prepared environment" in assisting the development of the soul. Every Catholic Church is, in fact, such a specially prepared environment, with objects in it carefully selected and so presented to the individual as to help on his inner development. Still more completely is this principle carried out in the case of Religious Orders, where it is applied to every department of life. In such cases too, as in a Montessori school, what is left out (of the environment) is almost as important as what is put in.

(2) USE OF DIDACTIC MATERIAL

A teacher of the old-fashioned type, on going into a Montessori school for the first time, is usually surprised—not to say appalled—by the *material* nature of the education in progress. All round the room he sees rows of shelves and cupboards containing a great variety of material objects. He sees the children going to and from these cupboards, selecting their occupations, returning the apparatus

ST. ANNE'S SCHOOL, SOUTHWARK (NOTRE DAME)
Exercises in Practical Life—washing up

when they have finished, and making a fresh choice. They seem to be almost entirely preoccupied with these things ; to him, they appear to be simply wasting their time—" fiddling about " incessantly with wooden blocks, wooden rods, beads, colour-tablets, cards, button frames, number frames and the like. Or if they are not doing any of these things, he may see them walking round the room in a sort of procession to music, carrying vases or flags or little bells ; or perhaps going about the room dusting the furniture or sweeping the floor. It does not seem possible to such a teacher—used, as he is, to the rigidity and immobility of an ordinary class-room—that any real intellectual development can be going on amidst all this bustling about and " playing " with material.

Exactly similar, though on a different plane, is the impression received by a person of Puritanical training (like a Quaker for instance), on entering a large Catholic church for the first time. He beholds everywhere about him, with astonishment, not to say horror, a similar emphasis on the material side of things. He sees the worshippers with their attention fixed upon all kinds of material objects—rosaries, images, candles, incense, pictures ; he sees them moving about from place to place *doing things*, carrying flowers, lighting candles, genuflecting, making the sign of the cross, going in processions. The very central devotion of Catholicism, the Holy Mass itself, appears to the Quaker as something material and unspiritual. Believing as he does that the spiritual life is a purely interior one, he finds it impossible to believe that this

preoccupation with all manner of visible and tangible objects can assist in the development of the spiritual life. In fact he imagines that these things must tend to act as hindrances and distractions, serving to keep back the soul from soaring into the supersensible regions of true spiritual experience. In precisely the same way, the old type of teacher believes that the Montessori child's preoccupation with the didactic material must tend to keep its mind from soaring into the region of purely intellectual operations.

(3) FROM THE SENSIBLE TO THE SUPERSENSIBLE

The trouble in both cases—with the Quaker in a Catholic church and the teacher in the Montessori school—lies in this, that neither realizes that the end of all this preoccupation with external objects is not in the objects themselves, but in the reactions which they evoke. I remember once hearing an experienced and successful Montessori directress trying to explain to a group of student-teachers the significance of the child's constant repetition of its exercises with the material. "It is not the exercise that matters in itself," she said, "but the development that goes on inside the child's mind—a development of which the outer action is but a sign. It is, in fact," she continued, "very much like what Catholics say of a sacrament, viz., that it is an outward sign of an inward grace." The lady herself was not a Catholic, but the analogy had impressed her as a striking and useful one.

It is of course *only* an analogy, because the operations of Grace belong to the supernatural

order. The analogy would have been more exact if she had referred to sacramentals rather than sacraments.[1]

Even, however, in the case of the sacraments the simile used by the Montessori directress is a just one, to this extent at any rate, that the operation of grace, resulting from a right use of the sacraments, is often something of which the individual is unconscious. The effects of the sacraments can be observed afterwards in an increased development of spiritual powers and a finer moral susceptibility. Similarly the right use of the didactic material leads to a development of the intellectual powers by a process of which the child is not conscious.

(4) FREEDOM TO CHOOSE ONE'S OCCUPATION

In a Montessori school, as we have seen, a child so long as he knows the right uses of the various pieces of material is allowed a considerable degree of freedom as to which he may use at any particular time—except of course when some collective lesson like the Silence game is in progress. Similarly in a Catholic church, except at such times when he is joining in the collective worship of the Mass, the individual is free to move about and choose the particular form of devotion which answers to the needs of his particular soul at the time, be it the rosary, or the "Stations of the Cross," or the

[1] "Sacramentals are rites, blessings, blessed objects, that is to say, outward signs and symbols productive of salutary effects in the soul. They do not remit sin nor produce grace of themselves, as do the sacraments, but they act *ex opere operantis Ecclesiae, ex sua impetratione*."—*Catholic Liturgy*, Lefebre, p. 111.

offering of a candle, or going to confession and so on. The child in the Montessori school is given the most minute instruction as to how to use the material, down to the smallest detail, and is left free to use it when he likes.

Similarly in the Church the child is most carefully taught how to go to Confession and to Holy Communion, and is then left free to choose when he will go.

The Catholic Church is not based on the coercion of the individual, but on the assumption that Divine Grace operates in every individual, as the source of his religious life. So, in a Montessori school, the intellectual development is not a thing that needs to be forced ; it is based on the assumption that there is in the child an inward urge or prompting, which shows itself in the spontaneous operations of the intellect. Neither the operations of Grace in the one case, nor the promptings of the intellect in the other are things that can be seen ; but their presence can be proved by the results which they bring about. As it is the Faith of Christians, under the operations of Grace, which—humanly speaking—keeps the Church going, so it is this inner, imperious, spontaneous working of the intellect that forms the driving power of a Montessori school. It is a power akin to those mysterious forces of life which keep going the vegetative and animal functions of our bodies. If anyone doubts its efficacy, as a driving power in education, let him sit for half-an-hour with his eyes open in a well-managed Montessori school.

(5) METHOD OF CATHOLIC PRIEST AND MONTESSORI DIRECTRESS

In the old type of infant school, where class teaching predominated, the teacher was the continued focus of the child's attention, the medium, *par excellence*, through which he learnt. It was the teacher's business to talk, the child's to sit still and listen. The successful teacher was the one who, by various artifices, managed most completely to rivet the children's attention to herself. It is quite otherwise in a Montessori school. Here the personality of the directress does not obtrude itself. She is called a *directress*, not a teacher, because it is her business, not so much to teach, as to direct the spontaneous energies of the child into useful and formative channels. A certain amount of instruction, of course, must be given by the directress in the meaning and use of the didactic material.

In adopting this rôle the directress relies, for the child's development, on the inner unconscious growth which results from its work with the material. This is a process which, once started, goes on independently of her, and is the more successful the more completely she is able to efface herself. From this point of view she may be regarded as a link between the child and the material, putting him in touch with the means of his own self-development.

If one compares the rôle of a Catholic priest with that—let us say—of a Free Church minister a similar contrast comes to light. The Catholic priest performs his high office, as dispenser of the

Sacraments, with an impersonal self-effacement, whereas the personality of the Protestant minister, with his sermon and extempore prayers, is strikingly prominent. In fact what is called the "success" of the service very largely depends on him. It is true that it is part of a priest's duty to give instruction, and this must be accurate ; but this does not occupy so prominent a place in a Catholic service as in a Protestant, where, in point of fact, the sermon has to take the place of the Elevation. It is interesting to note, too, that Dr. Montessori has been criticized for insisting that the instruction given to the children in her schools should be in a particular and prescribed form. The words the directress has to say are (so these critics affirm) too stereotyped—which is exactly the complaint of many Protestants against the words used by the priest in the Catholic Church.

As the dispenser of the Sacraments, the priest may be also regarded as the link between the materials of the Sacraments and the individual who is to make use of them. Furthermore—like the Montessori directress—the priest knows that his duties are most successfully accomplished when he has brought the individual to the use of the Sacraments, and is content to keep himself in the background, leaving the spiritual development of the soul in his charge to the unseen operation of Divine Grace which accompanies their proper use.

(6) FAITH AND WORKS

The principle of auto-education means, as we have already stated, that, intellectually, the child must work out his own salvation. The teacher,

however expert and willing, cannot do it for him. Merely being told things by the teacher is not enough for the child to learn them ; there must be a corresponding self-activity on the part of the child before the knowledge becomes real and vital. The teacher's part is, of course, an essential one, and the child could not progress without it. At the same time it is equally true that without the child's active co-operation, *i.e.*, his " works," his knowledge would be dead as—" Faith without works is dead."

(7) USE OF EXTERNALS TO FOCUS ATTENTION

Everyone knows how easily the attention of little children is distracted from one thing to another. In this connexion it is interesting to note the useful effect of the didactic material. It frequently happens, when a child is working at some piece of apparatus, that its attention becomes diverted by something else in the room. It may be by another child who asks a question, or by the entrance of a visitor, or by some unusual noise, or by the divagations of the child's own imagination in the realm of fancy. The noteworthy thing is that as a rule these periods of distraction do not last long. The presence and the nature of the material combined, somehow seem to act as a check on mind-wandering, almost as though there were some mysterious power of attraction in the material itself which draws the child's attention once more back to it. It reminds one exactly of the manner in which one's rosary beads assist in keeping the mind on one's devotions. Who has not, in saying his rosary, sometimes discovered—when he has

come to the end of a decade—that his attention has been wandering, and found, moreover, his distracted thoughts brought to heel by the check imposed on them from without, as his fingers pass on to the next decade of the "specially prepared didactic apparatus" of the rosary. Indeed the whole environment of the worshipper in a Catholic church is so designed as to turn back the wandering attention to devotional channels, just as the whole environment of the child in a Montessori school is so devised as to direct the child's attention to things of intellectual interest.

(8) AUTHORITY

I have heard it said (by Protestants) that the Montessori method ought to be better adapted to a Protestant than to a Catholic atmosphere, because —so it is averred—the large measure of freedom permitted to the child is inconsistent with the Catholic idea of authority and dogma. We need not repeat here what we have already said as to the true nature of liberty (pp. 115–119). This point happened to come up in a conversation when Dr. Montessori was present. She remarked: "There is dogma as well as liberty in my method if you can only discern it. When you say to the child 'This is red,' or 'This is seven,' what are these but dogmatic statements?" It cannot be too often repeated that the Montessori idea of liberty is a liberty only to do what is right, and to think what is true. It is the teacher's duty not only to encourage all right and useful spontaneous activities, but vigorously to correct all that is evil and imperfect.

DOMINICAN CONVENT, SION HILL, BLACKROCK, DUBLIN
Children using models of the liturgical vestments

There are other similarities in method to which attention might be drawn in this chapter, such as the use of "silence," or the voluntary undertaking of arduous occupations for some higher end (which, says Dr. Montessori, reminds one of the attitude of the souls in Purgatory), or the performance of practical duties (the "exercises of practical life") not for their own sake, but as a means of inner development, like the "obediences" of the religious life—but enough has already been said to show that in the method of a Montessori school there is a greater similarity to the method of the Catholic Church than is to be found in that of the ordinary type of school.

A Common Psychology

The root reason for this similarity of method is not far to seek. It is simply this, that they are both based on the same psychology, viz.—that man is a twofold being, made up of body and spirit. If man were a purely spiritual being there would be as little use for a Montessori method of education as for a sacramental system of religion.

It is true that the intellect of man is a super-sensible faculty, by reason of which he is raised above the animals, and made capable of "immortal longings," and "thoughts that wander through eternity." Yet, though the intellect is a super-sensible faculty, and though it is by no means essential to an intellectual being to have a body (the angels are intellectual beings and have no body), in man the operations of the intellect are inextricably bound up with the activity of the bodily sense organs, to this

extent at least, that the material with which the intellect works has its origin in the senses. St. Thomas Aquinas, the great Catholic theologian, accepted the Aristotelian maxim to which we have already referred, that there is nothing in the intellect which was not first in the senses. The human intellect depends, then, on the bodily senses for the raw materials from which it abstracts incorporeal ideas.

Thus a man deprived of sight from his birth can form no true concept of the idea of " redness." The only idea he can form about it must be by analogy, by using ideas derived through the other senses. He may think of redness as a quality like the sound of a trumpet ; or he may imagine the proportions of a beautiful cathedral as being something like the harmony of a piece of music (did not Goethe say that Gothic Architecture was like " frozen music " ?) but his ideas on such matters must always be based on the impressions supplied by other senses than sight. The process is different in the man who was once able to see and has later become blind ; for his intellect (*intellectus agens*), working on his previous visible impressions, has already abstracted from these, ideas which remain long after the sense which supplied their material has ceased to function.

With the angels, however, the case is different. Having no bodies they can have no sense organs, and therefore their ideas cannot have a sensory basis. Their ideas are, in fact—so theologians tell us—directly infused. There could, therefore, in the nature of the case, be no such thing as a Montessori school for little angels ! This is the reason why

the operations of the intellect in the angelic mind are of a different order from those of man ; for the angelic mind—to use the scholastic phrase—works "intuitively," *i.e.*, it apprehends truth with a complete and instantaneous comprehension. The intellect of man however works "discursively" [*species intellectualis abstractiva est propria ex alienis*].

The writer once heard a conversation between Dr. Montessori and a learned Dominican. The latter, who had read her books carefully, remarked that he had been struck by the agreement between them and the principles of the scholastic philosophy. It would be easy to cite many examples to illustrate this, but the following must suffice :

(*a*) In her chapter on "Intelligence" Dr. Montessori says : "The first characteristic which presents itself to us as an indication of intellectual development is related to *time*. The masses are so much alive to this primitive characteristic that the popular expression 'quick' is synonymous with intelligent." Thus we can have various degrees of intelligence. At one end there is the very dull, "slow" mind which seems often to be specially hampered by its gross material connection ; then the quick mind—more agile and "spirituel" (as the French would say); and, at the other end of the scale, the instantaneous comprehension of the angelic mind. It is interesting in this connexion to recall one of the stories told about St. Thomas Aquinas himself. Asked on one occasion what he regarded as the greatest gift that God had bestowed on him, he replied that, in all his life, he had never read any author without understanding his meaning

at the first reading. Well, indeed, was he called the *angelic* Doctor !

(*b*) To take another example. We have seen how great an emphasis Dr. Montessori lays on "auto-education," viz., that the child should as far as possible be guided into discovering things for himself. St. Thomas says : "There are two ways of acquiring knowledge : (1) By invention or finding out, and (2) by discipline or learning. Invention is the highest mode and learning stands second. We read in *Ethics :* 'He is best who understands all things by means of himself, but he is good who obeys him who talks well.'"

(*c*) We will conclude with another passage from St. Thomas. "There are three degrees of the cognitive faculty. There is first the act of the corporeal organ, *i.e.*, the sense, which knows particulars ; secondly, the power, which is neither the act of the bodily organ nor conjoined with corporeal matter, and such is the intellect of angels, the object of which is form as it exists without matter ; and thirdly, there is the human intellect, which stands midway between the other two, which is the form of a body, although not the act of a bodily organ. . . . We must therefore admit that our intellect knows material things by abstraction from phantasms ; and that by material things so considered it becomes in some manner able to understand immaterial things."

The Catholic Church has never for a moment countenanced the belief, so common in Eastern philosophies, that matter is somehow a mistake, a drag on the spirit, something from which the soul

must disentangle itself in order to be free. The doctrine of the Incarnation, and all that it involves, is a flat denial of this point of view. Our Blessed Lord Himself, by sharing our human bodily nature, raised material substance to the highest possible degree. And, knowing its weaknesses, in this the most intimate manner possible, He instituted the Sacramental system. Here matter, far from being a thing to be despised, becomes the very means to our highest spiritual good.

And the Catholic Church—a thing visible and tangible in itself—a city set on a hill—has always followed the example set by her Founder in making use of material things for spiritual ends. In her "Sacramentals," and in general, in the infinite variety of her liturgical developments, she has always worked on this principle.

It only remains to point out that a method of education based upon so similar a view of the educative value of a prepared material environment would—*ipso facto*—lend itself most readily to religious education on Catholic lines.

APPENDIX

The "New" Child and Original Sin

SOME Catholics—on reading Dr. Montessori's accounts of the extraordinarily good and spontaneous behaviour of the children in her schools—have read into her doctrines a sort of new Pelagianism. They conclude that her fundamental principles are based upon a glorification of the "natural man." This is a false conclusion, although a few extracts here and there in her writings—taken alone and out of their context—might tend to give such an impression.

As a Catholic Dr. Montessori recognizes of course the existence of the two orders of life—the Natural and the Supernatural. She has not however fallen into the heresy which asserts—that, as a result of the Fall, mankind is *totally depraved*, and incapable of even *natural* virtues. (It was the early Protestants—particularly the Calvinists—who maintained this desperate doctrine.) She says:

"Those who assert that human nature is still wholly good have triumphantly claimed that our method is based on this idea, whilst those who contend that original sin has completely distorted human nature have been amongst its severest critics...."

" *In reality there is no question of absolute principles involved.* How apt are we to say that a child is doing wrong, when he does something which bothers us, or which changes the routine of our habits and disturbs our rest and comfort. Have we ever asked ourselves what are the good actions and the bad actions of the little child? Have we never committed the error of judging the child according to our conventional standard rather than according to the Divine Plan? Is it not possibly true that we forget many sacred principles, when we are face to face with that little one whom Jesus Christ offered to us as a guide to lead us to the Kingdom of Heaven? In the Creation the Bible tells us that man was made to the image and likeness of God, and Original Sin has disturbed this Divine Plan. By education then we must strive to prepare for Christ's redeeming Grace. . . .

" But this does not mean that we are to make the child to *our* image and give *ourselves* to him as an example of perfection. Between us and the baptized child there lies the distance created by our sins. Therefore the child is better than we are.[1] ' Amen, I say unto you, unless you be converted and become as little children you shall not enter the Kingdom of Heaven.' It is evident that we must suffer little children to go to Jesus and we must not pretend that they should come to us. This error, caused by pride on our part, is one of the most fatal misunderstandings in regard to the childish soul

[1] This, of course, means speaking in a negative way—concerning the absence of sin: it does not mean to imply that a child, dying just after baptism, would take a higher place in Heaven than a saint who has triumphed over a life-time of temptations.

(see Chapter III). We have not in the past given him the means which he needs in order to live and perfect himself in the environment which surrounds him ; and, as an example for him to imitate, we have given him—too often—a sinner. Let us show a greater charity and a greater justice. Let us give him that which he requires for the development of his whole being, and let us allow him the freedom to follow those laws which he feels in the depths of his soul, aspiring towards perfection, and yearning to work and love. Therefore let us stop a moment and see whether, instead of the child having to learn from us, we might not have to learn from him.

" The weakness and liability to fall, remaining in his soul and in our own as a consequence of original sin, should—in any case—call forth the most enlightened charity on our part ; a help accompanied with increasing delicacy ; a refined Christian perfection in our attitude and actions as a teacher ; but it should never allow us, and far less give us the right, to assume the position of a severe judge, and blind dispenser of useless punishments. Owing to the same sin the child's flesh is subject to pain and disease, but this does not prevent his body from being God's most perfect handiwork, which may reveal the splendours of health when we have given it the proper nourishment and an environment free from disease. . . .

" That children placed in the Montessori school are better behaved, more obedient, more forbearing and so on, does not touch the intrinsic question of real goodness ; the child who has had the spiritual

Photo by D. L. Stewart.

NOTRE DAME MONTESSORI SCHOOL, DOWANHILL, GLASGOW

Liturgical Vestments (in miniature) as worn by the Priest during Holy Mass. The colours—purple, green, black, white or red—vary according to the parts of the Liturgical year or special Feast Days. (See Appendix.)

treatment offered by our method (*i.e.*, apart from special religious training) has found an environment better adapted for his development ; *he is not however really good because of this, from the point of view of supernatural virtue.* In the same way, it might be said that a man who is not intoxicated is calmer, more poised and better than one who is drunk. However this difference comes from the alcohol and not from the heart. Two men, who were starving, might insult and wound each other in trying to procure the same piece of bread, whereas two men—the same two—who were not hungry might greet each other with a smile.

" *It is a question of individuals who are more or less fortunate, and not necessarily of individuals who are more or less good.* And if the conditions of even physical well-being can produce such distinct differences, how much more will it be true of the conditions of psychic well-being !

" Let us therefore consider our method simply in the light of another contribution to the well-being of the child. His soul is invigorated, his mind develops with greater clearness and poise. Many spiritual clouds, much baseness due to moral weakness disappear, and thus that soul which grows strong will have a greater power of resistance against the moral diseases which it may encounter in the world, just as a well-nourished body will be better able to resist epidemics.

" There exists, however, something over and above all this. *The voluntary rising towards the good, a sacrifice made out of love, heroic virtue, and sanctity cannot be attained by means of a rational*

psychic treatment; but a strong, clean man will be more ready to receive Divine Grace and make it bear fruit. Christianity itself teaches us that human dignity must be helped, respected, and recognized in its greatness.

"*Specie tua, pulchritudine tua intende, prospere procede et regna . . .*"

Put briefly, then, Dr. Montessori's attitude in this matter is this: There are two orders of life, the Natural and the Supernatural.

The best foundation for the Supernatural life is the right and proper development of the Natural.

The more perfectly developed the natural faculties, the greater their use in the supernatural sphere when sanctified by the Grace of God.

On the Doctrine of Original Sin

In connexion with Dr. Montessori's views on the subject of Original Sin, the following incident is worth recording. Some years ago a Quaker—now a convert—was discussing this subject with the Dottoressa. As most people know, one of the distinguishing features of the Quaker Sect is that they have discarded all the Sacraments, even that of Baptism. This Quaker, in common with most of his brethren, was specially puzzled by the Doctrine of Original Sin, and was glad to have the opportunity of discussing it with one who was both a Catholic and a scientist, and also passionately devoted to little children. When questioned as to the fate of babies who die unbaptized, Dr. Montessori (after some preliminary remarks as to the limited function of the intellect and the necessity of

Faith) replied : " When you come to know the Catholic Church more intimately, you will realize more and more that—speaking generally—the Church strives unceasingly to do all she can to *get rid* of the effects of sin, *not* retain them. As to this particular question, the fate of unbaptized babies," she went on, " I would not worry yourself about them ; for you can rest assured that—anxious as you are for their well-being and happiness—Almighty God is infinitely more so." In endeavouring to make clear the doctrine of Original Sin, she said :

" With Original Sin man lost his immediate connexion with God. This is only a manner of expression, but one which means, if it means anything, that a profound change took place, a change so profound that one can only describe it as a passing from Life to Death.

" Now this change—the Fall of Man—was of such a nature that man could not and can not repair it himself. The sin of our first parents may be compared to the action of a man, who, having—*by his own deliberate choice*—jumped from the roof of a house, cannot of his own free will jump back again.

" Now let us imagine—for the purposes of illustration—that, by this fall, the man's nature was changed so completely that he was changed into a donkey. There will now be born many other donkeys ; these may be very good *as donkeys*, but they cannot, by their own efforts, be changed back into men again."

This is naturally only an illustration, and is not

intended to go beyond a certain point. What Dr. Montessori means is that by "jumping off the roof" man lost his supernatural life with the special endowments that went with it. The natural man still remains; but, however perfectly developed his natural faculties, the life of "fallen man" remains in the Natural Order, and of himself he cannot raise himself into the Supernatural Order. This can only be done through the assistance of the Grace of God.

"For this purpose (*i.e.* the Work of Redemption)" continued Dr. Montessori, "God came down to Earth and was incarnate as Man to restore the fallen nature of man to its supernatural state.

"The work of Our Lord Jesus Christ in the Redemption of Mankind—restoring him from the disharmony of his nature to re-communion with God—may be compared, by way of illustration, to the achievement of Marconi in the world of ether. Marconi has established a harmony, amongst the vibrations of the ether where there was none before; and, by so doing, has put into communion with each other persons who were far apart and out of relationship with each other.

"The waves of ether were there all the time, but until Marconi harmonized them no communication was possible. So one may say that Jesus Christ has, as it were, put in order and harmonized the vibrations of the moral world, thereby bringing man once more into communion with God.

"This simile may be carried further to illustrate the necessity of using the Sacraments—thus: Wireless communication is impossible without the proper means to intercept the vibrations. There are

waves of ether at this moment coming through the room from London, Paris, Berlin, etc. ; but without the proper apparatus we cannot avail ourselves of them. For this purpose we must use something tangible, like earphones or a loud speaker. Similarly in the spiritual world it is necessary that we should have some tangible and material means to assist us. Such in fact are the Sacraments. And, as we cannot hear the wireless waves unless we—willingly and of our own accord—place the earphones to the ear, or turn on the loud speaker, so we cannot receive the fullness of God's Grace unless we willingly make use of the Sacraments.

" Furthermore we may have the best apparatus in the world at our disposal, but, unless we make use of it, it will be of no advantage to us ; similarly there are slack Catholics who never frequent the Sacraments. It is only a little thing to switch on the loud speaker, but it must be done. Similarly one might say, for instance, that Baptism is only a little thing, but it must be done. Otherwise the merits of Our Lord's Passion and Death on the Cross—infinite reservoir of Grace—will remain unapplied to the individual soul.

Christmas Story

It may interest readers, especially mothers and teachers, to hear how Dr. Montessori explained Christmas Eve and Midnight Mass to a small child of three who was living in the same house. Taking him on her knees she began :

"If last night you had woken up in the middle of the night, you would have found all the lights on and the whole house lit up. And if you had gone to look for Mummy you would not have found her in her room, but you would have found her bed all made up. And if you had come to look for me it would have been the same. You would have found me gone and my bed all made up.

"And if you had gone upstairs to the attic to look for Signorina Lorna you would have found the staircase all lighted up, but no Signorina in her room, and *her* bed all made up.

"Now if you had looked out of the window into the street, you would have seen lots and lots of people, all out in the middle of the night, and all walking in the same direction.

"And there would be a great silence in the night, broken only by the ringing of the bells—ding-dong ; ding-dong ! and all the windows in all the houses would be lighted up.

"What is it all about ? What has happened ? Where are all these people going ? Why are the bells ringing across the silence of the night ?

"Now I will tell you the wonderful thing that has happened," and here the narrator's eyes sparkled with suppressed and joyous excitement. "This is the reason. It is because the Baby Jesus has been born, and all these people are going to see Him and fall down before Him and adore Him."

Then she told him the story of the Shepherds, and the Angels appearing and singing the "Gloria." And then she softly played the hymn to him on a shepherd's pipe, just as the shepherds would do.

The next year she told him the same story, in the same way, and also the year following ; and he grew to love it exceedingly. Often he would say, " Tell me that story, please, about how I should go upstairs and find Mummy's bed all made up and your bed all made up, etc., etc."

Montessori Explosions

Here is an example of a Montessori " explosion," which happened in a Convent school in London.[1] I was sitting quietly watching the little ones at work at their respective tables ; some were doing grammar, some writing, others were busy with the arithmetical apparatus. A little girl near me was using the multiplication-table board. This is a simple but very ingenious arrangement by means of which the children are able to work out the various multiplication tables for themselves. This particular child was doing a little research on the " nine times table," and had recorded the results of her observations on a piece of paper, thus :—

$9 \times 1 = 9$
$9 \times 2 = 18$
$9 \times 3 = 27$
$9 \times 4 = 36$
$9 \times 5 = 45$
$9 \times 6 = 54$ and so on.

She had nearly finished the series, had in fact just recorded the fact that $9 \times 8 = 72$, when she suddenly started. Her face flushed and her eyes sparkled, and she ran her little forefinger up and

[1] Convent of the Assumption, Kensington Square.

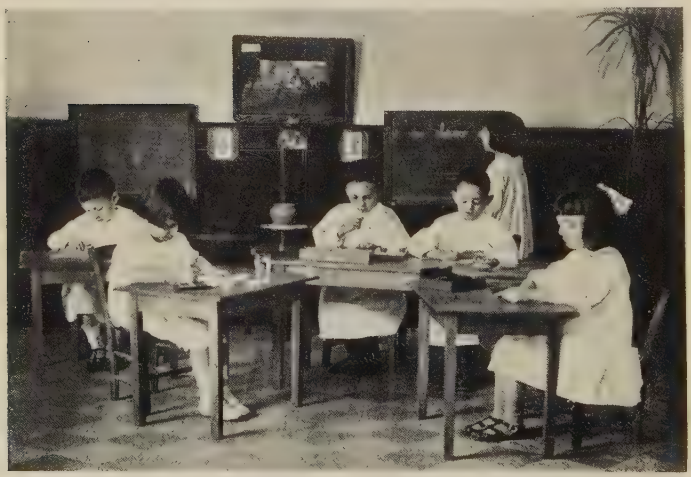
down the column of figures in a state of great excitement. Evidently something had happened, something strange and unexpected and very exciting ; but what it was I was at a loss to find out.

Suppressing my curiosity I sat still and waited in the hope that the mystery might solve itself. It did. The little girl—she was only about five-and-a-half years old—rose from her place, and, still carrying her precious document, went over to a little friend of hers at an adjacent table. And this is what I overheard. " Do look, Jenny," she said, " I've found such a funny thing." Jenny, who was deep in " Singulars and Plurals " and obviously unwilling to be disturbed half turned her head, listening with polite indifference. " Look," went on the other pointing with her finger to the numbers on her paper, " It goes 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, and so on going down in *this* column (the digit column) and it goes up just the other way on the other row, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 . . . (the tens column). *Isn't* it funny." Unfortunately Jenny was so anxious to get back to her grammar that she did not appreciate the discovery. But the wonder of this unexpected relationship between the figures, this unsuspected law joining together the separate results of her previous researches, still gripped the little scientist. She felt :

" Like some watcher of the sky
When a new planet swims into his ken."

And like every discoverer she felt a profound instinct impelling her to share her discovery with some one else. She was bursting to tell some one. She

A CORNER OF A MONTESSORI ROOM IN MILAN
Note the child by the wall doing an exercise with the bells



A GROUP OF CHILDREN IN A MORE ADVANCED CLASS

looked round the room. It was an unresponsive looking public. All her little friends were busy at their own tables ; the directress, too, was engaged in giving some one a lesson at the other end of the room. So slowly she made her way back to her own table near me. As she did so her eyes fell on me. I was a perfect stranger; but at any rate I was a human being, and presumably a rational creature ; and apparently I wasn't doing anything particular and so could not feel disturbed if spoken to. For a few seconds she stood irresolute, torn between a child's natural shyness and her vehement desire to communicate her discovery to some one. Finally she sidled up to me, timidly, with her manuscript, stood at my side and showed it to me, and then, very seriously, said, just as she had said to Jenny, " Look, isn't it funny ? it goes 9, 8, 7, 6, etc., on this side, and 1, 2, 3, 4, etc., on the other ? "

" Yes," I replied—quite truthfully—" It is funny " ; for, to be quite candid, I had never noticed the two sequences myself. Possibly some who read this account may not have noticed it either—how in the nine-times table the digit column descends and the ten column ascends, the two series crossing each other at 45 and 54.

I really believe that a scientist discovering some hitherto unknown relationship between the atoms and ions could experience no greater, certainly no more genuine, thrill of discovery than did this little child. It reminded one of a sentence in Emerson, which, though exaggerated in its form of expression, is nevertheless suggestive in this connexion,

" Generalization is an influx of divinity into the mind—hence the thrill that attends."

On another occasion, in another school I was visiting, a small boy of four years of age, who was just beginning to learn the idea of number by the means of the numerical rods, came up to me with one of the rods in his hand and remarked with portentous gravity, " This is seven," It seemed to him a great relief to get the momentous burden of this knowledge off his little chest. After this he walked as solemnly away again, and disappeared into the general bustle of the class ; and I suppose we shall never meet again in this life ! But I shall never forget my initiation into the marvels of the mystic number " seven."

Intellectual Hunger

The following anecdote, illustrates the astonishing intellectual concentration often displayed by the children as they work spontaneously with the apparatus. This child had already passed the purely sensory stage and was busying herself with the study of numbers.

I had been spending an hour or two quietly watching the children at work in a school near Barcelona. The school was run by some Franciscan Sisters in connexion with a Maternity Hospital. My attention was attracted to a small child of about five who was working near where I sat. She was making up little addition sums on a low blackboard at the side of the room, and was working

out the answers with the aid of the numerical rods on the floor. Most of the other children—there were more than fifty in the room—were marching round the line to the music of a piano. This particular child, however, was so interested in her sums that she had resisted the siren call of the music, and was working ahead, quite oblivious to the noise of the music and marching.

It happened that, at the moment when I was watching her, some visitors came into the room. One of these, with more good nature than discretion, produced a bag of sweets and as each child marched by offered it a bon-bon. This ill-timed charity—as was only to be expected—soon disorganized the marching, and the children began to crowd round the visitor. The latter, becoming embarrassed by so much and such clamorous attention, handed the bag of sweets to a young and untrained assistant who was in charge as the directress was not in the room at the moment. So now the children pressed round the assistant, holding out their hands for more.

All through this disturbance my little friend with the rods had been going on steadily with her work. The last sum that she had made up for herself—if I remember rightly it was "8 plus 7 plus 5"—seemed to puzzle her very much. So with set face and serious brow she left her place by the wall and went in search of the assistant at the other end of the room, in order to get her doubts cleared up. She arrived at the moment when the assistant was surrounded by a forest of little hands stretched up to receive the sweets. The little arithmetician made

her way in amongst these, looked up into the assistant's face, and held up her hand to attract her attention. The assistant—who was nonplussed by a situation which had got out of her control—saw my little friend amongst the others holding up her hand, and not realizing the nature of her demand and thinking that she had come like the others to beg a sweet, simply took a sweet from the bag and put it into her upstretched hand.

The little child received it with disappointment written all over her face. She looked like one who had asked for bread and had been given a stone. Her intellectual hunger was so keen that it entirely overcame any desire for any material gratification that could be afforded by a sweet. So, not having found the assistance she had sought, she was once more thrown back on her own resources. Back she walked down the long room again to her blackboard and her rods, and once more began counting over the divisions of the rods. But the particularly interesting thing about the whole affair was this—*she actually used the sweet, which was still in her hand, as a sort of pointer, with which to count out the divisions of the rods!* One could scarcely imagine a more striking example of the triumph of the pure, spontaneously working intellect over the more material appetites.

This incident recalls a similar one which happened in one of the Montessori schools in Italy. A Cardinal, who was very fond of children, brought some biscuits which he distributed to the children. "When he had finished distributing them, instead of seeing the children put the food hastily into their

mouths, to his great surprise, he heard them call out, 'A triangle ! a circle ! a rectangle !' For it happened that the biscuits were made in geometrical shapes ; and the children were more interested in recognizing their old friends, whose acquaintance they had made with the geometrical apparatus, than in demolishing the biscuits."

(See also the story of the little boy in the workman's tenement house in Milan, described in Dr. Montessori's own handbook, pp. 64-65.)

A Lesson with a Model Altar

One of the most successful Montessori schools in any country is that in charge of the Sisters of Notre Dame of Namur at Dowanhill, Glasgow—an institution which has become something of a Mecca to those interested in education in Scotland. Besides the Montessori department, which includes some 300 children, there is also a High School containing about 600 girls, and, in addition to these, there is a Training College for teachers where over 200 resident students are trained for an educational career.

The Sisters in charge of the Montessori department have based their scheme of religious instruction on the lines of Dr. Montessori's experiment in Barcelona (as will be seen from many of the illustrations in this book). In this work the Sisters have received the cordial help and co-operation of the Rev. Father Bonney, Lecturer in Philosophy at Ushaw College, Durham. He it was, who with

his own skilful hands, constructed the beautiful model altar with all its appurtenances, shown in Figs. 4 and 8.

The lesson described below illustrates how useful such models may be in focussing the attention of children on liturgical details connected with the Sacrifice of the Mass. It is only fair to add that it was not a specially "got up" lesson, but just part of the ordinary school routine at which, without any warning to the teacher, the Editor was permitted to be present. The lesson has been reconstructed, as accurately as possible, from notes taken down at the time.

The class consisted of about a dozen children, who were gathered in an informal group about the directress and the altar. Near the latter was a table on which were spread out models of the various vestments and sacred vessels used by a priest at Mass. The average age of the children was about eight years. They all displayed the keenest interest in the lesson, and vied with one another for the privilege of being allowed to select and arrange the various objects mentioned. It may with justice be urged that it would be better to take the children into the vestry and the Church and show them real things. The particular value of the models, however, lies in this, that they can be used at any time, and for any length of time, and also that they can be handled by all the children in turn. The fact that the children handle these things themselves, placing the name of each object against it (Fig. 5), or arranging them as for Mass or Benediction (Figs. 4 and 8) is of great educational value. For

this not only helps to focus, but also to sustain the interest. But to return to the lesson. It might be mentioned, by the way, that the directress was not a "religious" but a lay teacher, and appeared as interested in the models as the children themselves. We have recorded the lesson in the conversational form in which it was given. The names are fictitious.

DIRECTRESS : This morning the priest is wearing white vestments, because it is the Octave of the Epiphany. What do we mean by the Octave of the Epiphany ?

MARY : It means the eighth day after.

DIRECTRESS : On what other days does the priest wear white ?

KATHLEEN : On the Feasts of Our Lord, and Our Lady.

DIRECTRESS : Any others ?

JOYCE : Of the saints who are not martyrs.

DIRECTRESS : Yes, also on the Feast of the Holy Angels. (*The Directress chooses a white chasuble from amongst the others and holds it up.*) Now who can tell me what the colour white signifies ?

CICELY : It is to show purity and innocence.

DIRECTRESS : Whilst we are talking of colours, who can tell me on what days the priest wears a red vestment ?

CICELY : On the Feasts of the Holy Martyrs.

DIRECTRESS : Any others ? (*Pause.*) Also on the Feast of Pentecost. What other colours does the priest wear ?

MARGARET : Purple.

DIRECTRESS : When does he wear purple ?

MARGARET : During Lent.

DIRECTRESS : At any other time ?

CICELY : During Advent.

DIRECTRESS : Are those all the liturgical colours used ?

SEVERAL : No, Miss X., also black and green.

DIRECTRESS : When is black used ?

MARGARET : At Masses for the dead.

DIRECTRESS : At any other time ?

MARY : On Good Friday.

DIRECTRESS : Very good, and when is green used?

JOAN : On all the other days which are not special days.

DIRECTRESS : Who can tell me which vestments are changed according to the different Feasts and times of the liturgical year ?

JOYCE : The chasuble, the stole and the maniple.

DIRECTRESS: Anything else ?

MARY : Also the thing—I do not know what it is called—which is put under the Missal.

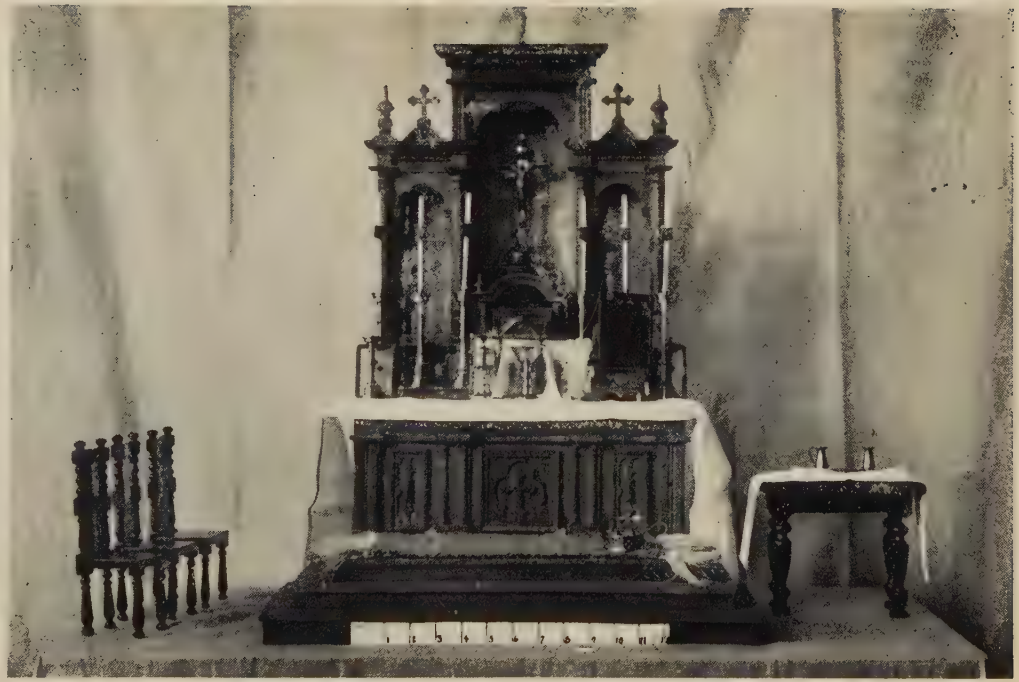
DIRECTRESS : That is the Missal cloth ; and we must not forget the tabernacle veil, the chalice veil, and the burse. Now who would like to lay out the vestments which the priest uses for Mass ? (*All hands go up eagerly.*) Well, Joan, you may try. (*Joan takes up the chasuble.*)

DIRECTRESS : What is the name of the vestment which you have in your hands ?

JOAN : This is the chasuble.

DIRECTRESS : Of what does the chasuble remind us ?

MARY : It is to remind us of the Cross which Our Lord carried on His shoulders.



NOTRE DAME MONTESSORI SCHOOL, DOWANHILL, GLASGOW

Miniature altar and credence table with their appurtenances made by the Rev. Father Bonney and presented to the above school. Note the scale ; the white line at the foot of the altar steps is a foot long.

DIRECTRESS : The next one, Joan. (*She picks up the alb.*)

JOAN. This is the alb.

DIRECTRESS : What does that represent ?

MARGARET : It is to remind us of the robe which Herod put on Our Lord, when they mocked Him.

DIRECTRESS : Now the other things. (*Joan picks up the amice, girdle, stole and maniple, and their significance is explained.*) Will somebody arrange them in their right order—as the priest will want them when he puts them on. (*This is done.*) As the priest puts on the garments, he says a special prayer with each. Do you see that little cross on the amice ? What is that to remind us of ?

MARY : That the Mass is the same Sacrifice as that of the Cross.

DIRECTRESS : When the priest puts on the amice he kisses the cross on it and touches his head with it.

Besides the priest's garments, what other things must we get ready ? (*Forest of hands again.*) Margaret ?

MARGARET. The chalice and the other things for the altar.

DIRECTRESS : If the person who is getting the things ready is not a Priest, what must he remember to do when touching the chalice ?

MARGARET : He must not touch it with his hands, but must use a piece of silk cloth.

DIRECTRESS : Why ?

JOAN : Because during the Mass the chalice contains Our Lord's blood.

DIRECTRESS (*as Margaret takes the next object*) : What is that ?

MARGARET : It is the purificator.

DIRECTRESS : What is that used for ?

MARGARET : To wipe the chalice.

DIRECTRESS : Now the next thing. (*Margaret takes up the paten in her fingers.*) What has she done wrong ?

SEVERAL. She should not have touched it with her hands but with a piece of silk.

DIRECTRESS : What is the paten for ?

CICELY : It is for the Host to rest on. (*The pall, chalice veil, and burse are taken out and named at the same time.*)

DIRECTRESS : What is in the burse ?

CICELY : The corporal.

DIRECTRESS : Take it out, and look at it. The name comes from the Latin word corpus—a body. It is so called because it is the cloth on which the Body of Jesus is going to rest. The priest may not put down the Chalice or the Host on the altar unless the corporal is there.

Now we must get the altar itself ready. Kathleen, you do it. The first thing is to fold up the cloth which is on the altar at present. (*This is done.*) What do you see on the altar ?

KATHLEEN : A square stone.

DIRECTRESS : What is it called ?

JOAN : The altar-stone.

DIRECTRESS : Quite right, and the altar-stone is really *the* altar ; what do we mean by that ?

KATHLEEN : A priest cannot say Mass except over an altar-stone.

DIRECTRESS : Yes, for instance, if a priest wanted to say Mass in a private house—as he does sometimes—he must take an altar-stone with him, and it must have been blessed by a Bishop.

What is there in the middle of a real altar stone ?

CICELY. Some relics of the saints.

DIRECTRESS : Where do the relics come from ?

MARY : From Rome.

DIRECTRESS : From the Catacombs at Rome. In the Catacombs—as you know—most of the early martyrs were buried ; there the Christians used to meet together for worship ; and there, too, priests would say Mass. For an altar they would use a tomb-stone under which was buried one of the martyrs. That is how the custom of saying Mass over the relics of the Saints began, and it has been kept up from that day to this.

What else is there on the altar that originated in those times ?

(*Pause.*) Well you must remember the catacombs were under the ground and therefore quite dark.

SEVERAL. Oh, the candles!

DIRECTRESS. Yes, there must always be at least two candles alight during Mass, and this is to remind us—amongst other things—of the times when the poor persecuted Christians were obliged to hear Mass in these underground passages. Even now, when visitors go to the catacombs in Rome—which happens every day—before they go in, each is presented with a candle to light up his way.

Now to go on with the preparation of the altar. What is the first thing we must put on the altar ?

RUTH : The altar-cloths.

DIRECTRESS : How many are there ?

RUTH. Three. (*These are put on the altar.*)

DIRECTRESS : Why are there so many altar-cloths ? (*No one knew.*) It is out of reverence, lest some of the drops of Our Lord's Precious Blood should fall from the chalice. Then they would not go through on to the altar beneath, but would be caught by the cloths. And if any drops did go on to the altar-cloths the priest himself would have to wash them out.

Now what else do we need ?

CICELY : The Missal-stand and the Missal. (*These are put on the altar.*)

JOAN. And the altar-cards.

DIRECTRESS : What is on these ?

MARY: The prayers which never change, and the last Gospel. Please, Miss X., we have not put the cloth under the Missal.

DIRECTRESS: Very good: you put it on; what colour will it be ?

MARY : The same as the colour for the day.

DIRECTRESS : Which is . . . ?

MARY : White. (*It is put under the Missal.*)

DIRECTRESS : And now what is this little table called ?

CICELY : The credence table.

DIRECTRESS : What must we put on it ?

CICELY : The cruets, with the water and the wine. (*The cruets are placed on the table.*)

DIRECTRESS : What else ?

JOYCE : A little towel and a small basin for the priest to wash his hands. (*These are put on.*)

DIRECTRESS (*looking round*) : Now is all ready ? We have forgotten something which should be on the first step leading up to the altar ; what is it ?

SEVERAL. Oh, the bell! (*It is placed in position.*)

DIRECTRESS : And here is the priest's hat. What is it called ?

MARY : A biretta.

DIRECTRESS : Now let us imagine that Mass is just going to begin ; and we shall go through all the actions of the Mass, and see exactly what the priest does and why he does it. (*She is about to begin, when a bell rings.*) But it will have to be another day, for it is time to stop now.

NOTE ON THE DEVELOPMENT AND EXTENT OF THE MONTESSORI METHOD THROUGHOUT THE WORLD

The Montessori Movement began in 1907 with the setting up of the first Casa dei Bambini in a slum quarter of Rome. From that time to the present it has gone on steadily increasing until now there is hardly a part of the globe where its influence has not been felt.

No circumstance, indeed, proclaims more loudly the essential soundness of the method than this—that it knows no distinction of colour or race or climate. It flourishes as happily amongst the so-called " Teutonic " races as amongst those of the Mediterranean countries. It has been applied with equally good results to the almond-eyed kiddies on the banks of the Yang-tse, to the bronzed Bambini

of the Ganges, and to the woolly-haired piccaninnies of the Niger. Montessori schools are to be found in almost every state of America, and they are found also—on the other side of the Pacific—in Japan and the Philippine Islands.

There is hardly a profession more conservative than the teaching profession, yet this literally world-wide recognition has been achieved in two decades; and every year sees the inauguration of new Montessori schools in different parts of the earth.

In Europe the countries which have taken up the method most are Italy, Spain, England and Holland, though there is hardly a country in Europe (except perhaps Iceland) where some Montessori schools are not to be found.

It must be remembered that the influence of Dr. Montessori's work and ideas extends far beyond the range of those schools which definitely associate themselves with her name. As Prof. Percy Nunn (London University) says :

> " It argues no ingratitude to the great name of Froebel and his thousands of devoted followers to connect the new impulse which is everywhere at work in our schools more directly with the doctrine and labours of Maria Montessori than with any other single source."

Several of the important educational movements of the present day are direct off-shoots from the Montessori Movement, such as the " Dalton Plan," and the " Individual Work System," for both Miss Parkhurst and Miss Mackinder were students under Dr. Montessori.

But the leaven of her ideas is not confined to

English speaking countries. The Dottoressa is being continually invited to different countries to give advice and explain her method. To take one year as an example. In 1926, at the invitation of their respective governments, she visited Germany, Italy, and the Argentine, and in the same year held an International Training Course for Teachers in London, at which twenty-two different nationalities were represented.

The spread of the method has been the more remarkable, considering the various circumstances that have militated against it. Chief amongst these are bad Montessori schools, or what one might call "Pseudo-Montessori schools," *i.e.*, directed by teachers who have never really grasped the first principles of the method. And here let it be said at once that a half-hearted and uncomprehending application of the method is almost sure to spell chaos. It is another case of the old proverb, *Corruptio optimi pessima*. Unless the method is taken seriously, studied and applied with patience and humility, it is better let alone. A visitor to one of these schools might very well conclude that the Montessori Method was only another of the many faddist schemes that abound in the world of education at the present day. Mention the name Montessori, and as often as not you will hear some one say: "Ah, Montessori, that's one of those schools where the children are all allowed to do just what they like. I prefer to have a school with some discipline in it!" This attitude of mind is very likely the result of a visit to, or a report of, one of these pseudo-Montessori schools. For it is just

the *discipline* shown by the little children which is the most remarkable feature of a true Montessori school. A Rev. Mother of a large school for young children said to me once, "We never really knew what discipline was until we introduced this method." No one—not even his enemies—would accuse Mussolini of underestimating the value of discipline, yet he is the President of the Montessori Society in Italy, and this itself should show the discerning that, whatever else the method may lack, it does not lack discipline.

But if bad Montessori schools tend to retard the spread of the method, it is nevertheless true that it is actual schools which are the best advertisement for the method—better even than Dr. Montessori's own lectures and writings. As the Dottoressa herself says, "It is the children themselves that spread my method. Happily they behave as I say they do in my books, and people go and see them, and at last believe it themselves."

We said just now that the teaching profession is a conservative one: when one considers the legion of faddists and eccentrics that abound in the sphere of education at the present time, one is bound to admit that a certain amount of caution is justifiable. Catholics especially have learnt to scent danger where the word "Freedom" is brandished about. It is therefore natural enough that in several countries it has happened that Catholics have not been so quick to take up the method as Protestants. But when the method is thoroughly understood by Catholics, it has—other things being equal—a better chance of being successfully applied by them than

ST. JOSEPH'S CONVENT, CALABAR, S. NIGERIA

Left. Montessori Class in open-air. *Right.* Girl using material for learning "Long-Division"

elsewhere. For Catholicism alone understands the true nature of liberty in the moral and intellectual realms. A significant incident was related to me by the Rev. Mother of one of the Montessori schools in England, herself an able directress. Amongst the many visitors that came to observe the children in her school was a Theosophist. This lady took a great interest in the educational activities of the Theosophical Society. After observing the directress at work for some time she remarked later on, in conversation with the Rev. Mother : " You Catholics have a great advantage over us in teaching your children, and in your dealings with them. Everything is so clear and definite with you ; you know exactly where to draw the line "—or words to that effect.

It is interesting to observe that one of the Religious Orders that has most widely adopted the Montessori Method is that of the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary. For there is hardly a Saint, apart from Our Lady, Mother of all the Bambini in the World, whom one can imagine more completely at home in the atmosphere of a Casa dei Bambini than the inventor of the Crib—itself a " didactic apparatus," appealing to the little ones through their senses. The Franciscan Missionaries of Mary have Montessori schools in various places in Italy, Austria, Hungary, Spain, and in a number of States in America ; also in Tripoli, Morocco (Rabat, Udja, Meknes, Marrakesco), in Syria (Aleppo), in Madagascar (Tananarive), in China (Fang-tse) and Japan (Nilayosky).

The method spreads from school to school like

a flame that is handed on, or like a seed that takes root, and then in due season disperses seeds to spring up in other parts of the country—often in spite of the fiercest opposition. Take for instance Ireland. A few years ago the method was unknown in that country. Then it was started in a school run by the Sisters of Mercy in Waterford. The most violent and persistent efforts were made to misrepresent the method, and to suppress its adoption by those who couldn't (or wouldn't) understand it. But the very violence of this opposition attracted more attention to it ; and as usual " truth would out." The method has now been adopted by the Ursulines in Waterford, and a Montessori Department started by the Dominican Sisters in Galway. In 1928, a course of lectures on the Montessori Method was given in Dublin to representatives from over a dozen Dominican Convents,with the result that several new Montessori schools have been opened.

Here is another example of " seeds taking root." About four years ago the Editor happened to be introduced in London to a nun who was on a visit from New Zealand. She was interested in modern educational methods, and was studying them on behalf of her school and training college of the Sacred Heart at Christ Church. On returning to New Zealand, she lectured on the method as she had seen it at work. The apparatus was sent for and a school started. In a letter, dated October, 1927, she wrote : " You will be pleased to hear that our Montessori school here is such a success that within the last few months no fewer

than thirteen other schools have ordered a full or partial set of the apparatus."

Turning to a very different part of the world we find the same tale repeats itself—in Nigeria. Writing from St. Joseph's Convent, Calabar, S. Nigeria, the Rev. Mother says (June 1927) : " At first I intended to introduce the Montessori method only amongst the children under eight years of age; but the results were so satisfactory that I am now gradually turning the whole school up to Standard VI into a Montessori school. . . .

" I have no European help in the school, but I have trained eight native girls and they are wonderfully good. . . .

" A large number of officials from all over the Protectorate, and even from the Gold Coast, have come to see the school, and all are unanimous in its praise. . . . The Secretary of the Board of Education wrote to me from Lagos the other day, ' I long to sit again in that quiet room, and see all those woolly heads and solemn faces. I cannot imagine a Nigerian class-room being a restful place, but yours certainly was '."

One would like to linger a little longer over the heroic work of this Rev. Mother, in this distant and unhealthy outpost of the Empire. It is impossible for one who has always lived comfortably in Europe to imagine the difficulties with which she has to cope almost single-handed. Any reader desiring to help those who are striving to live pure lives in a pagan environment, could not find a more deserving charity than to assist Mother Magdalen in her work among the Christian girls in her school.

The spread of the Montessori method in other countries has generally been along the same lines, but enough has been said to indicate the way in which the movement spreads. It is generally a case of "seeing is believing"; for the children themselves are the best propagandists, and always will be.

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